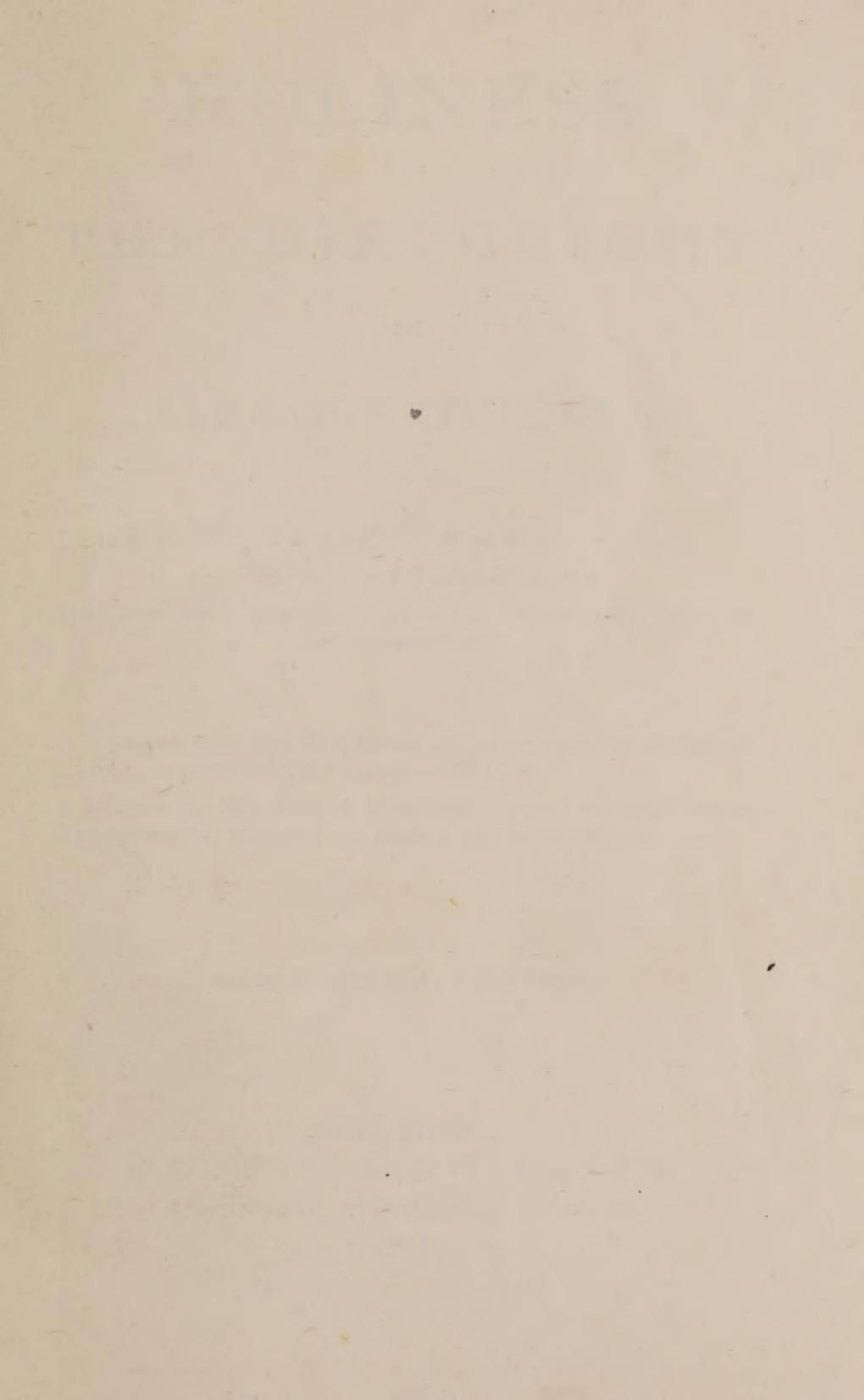


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HOLINESS THE BIRTHRIGHT OF ALL GOD'S CHILDREN.

BY REV. J. T. CRANE, D.D.,
Of the Newark Conference,

AUTHOR OF THE "RIGHT WAY," "POPULAR AMUSEMENTS," "ARTS OF INTOXICATION," ETC.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.—1 John i, 9.

I believe the New Birth to be an entire change of our inmost nature from the image of the devil to the image of God.—*John Wesley.*

SECOND EDITION, ENLARGED.

NEW YORK:
NELSON & PHILLIPS.
CINCINNATI: HITCHCOCK & WALDEN.

1875.

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

DURING the few months which have intervened since the first publication of this volume, I have continued to study the subject of which it treats, not only recurring to the usual sources of information, but also examining with care the various criticisms and comments favorable or otherwise, which have been elicited by the present discussion. The doctrinal position taken I hold, if possible, more firmly than ever. I am convinced, however, that a somewhat fuller exposition of it is expedient, and I have therefore added to this edition two new chapters, showing the nature of Regeneration and of Christian Perfection, and have re-written the first argument: pp. 69-78.

I am also at least partially convinced that the impression which I have shared with many others, in regard to the views of Mr. Wesley, may possibly be incorrect. His sermon on Sin in Believers certainly teaches, 1. That the regenerate are liable to sin; 2. That they still have sources of peril

remaining within ; 3. That they do sometimes fall into actual sin ; 4. That God does not always cast them off at the first wrong step, but still calls them his own, while he rebukes them for their errors, and warns them of their danger. If this constitutes the pith and substance of the discourse, as I understand my friend, Dr. Whedon, to affirm in the last number of the "Review," I fully concur with its teachings. It is clear to every thoughtful reader of Mr. Wesley, that only by such an interpretation may his various utterances be harmonized.

Gratified by the favor with which my brief treatise has been received, I again commit it to the Church, appealing to *the law and to the testimony*, and aware that all human reasonings must ultimately stand or fall by this test. J. T. CRANE.

BOUND BROOK, N. J., Jan., 1875.



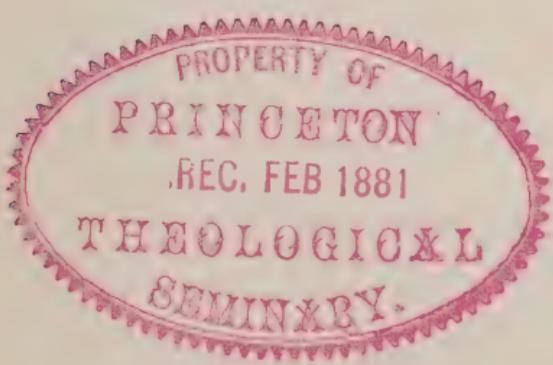
NOTE BY THE PUBLISHERS.

THIS second edition of the present volume is issued in compliance with a demand among both the ministry and people. Objections having been made to some of the doctrinal statements of the first edition, the author has made some addenda, as well as some restatements, which in his view show his positions to be in accordance with our doctrinal system. How far this is the case is left entirely to the judgment of the reader.



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HOLINESS

THE BIRTHRIGHT OF ALL GOD'S CHILDREN.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW LIFE AND ITS PROBLEMS.

THE great doctrine of the Scriptures, of the Reformation, and the evangelical Christianity of our own day, is Salvation by Faith. The apostolic commission is, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.* It is true, something must precede the act of faith. The sinner must

consider his ways, and realize in some degree his guilt and danger. He must yield to his convictions, be willing to forsake sin, and live a life of all obedience to divine law, and joyfully consent to be saved by grace alone. He that thus feels his guilt, and with a penitent, broken heart comes to Christ, abandoning every other refuge, and trusting in him for pardon, peace, and all else he needs, shall be saved. No matter how numerous, or how aggravated his sins, he shall be saved. Nay, he that thus repents and believes is saved. Saul, who three days before was a fierce persecutor, breathing threatenings and slaughter against God's people, and *exceedingly mad against them*, believes, and in that same moment is saved. The jailer at Philippi who, an hour be-

fore, drew his sword with the intention of plunging it into his own heart, believes and is saved. Thus the Gospel of Christ is *the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.*

But in what sense is the penitent believer thus saved? The infinite gift is instantaneous. He that believeth not is condemned; he that believeth is saved; and whether man can detect it or not, there is a point of time when the penitent passes from unbelief to belief, from death unto life. His condition, up to that moment, is one of inexpressible evil. He is guilty, condemned, corrupt, helpless, the wrath of God resting on him, and hell waiting his coming, with its eternal darkness and despair. Saved by faith, he attains a state inexpressibly exalted. He escapes from wrath; for

there is *no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.* He no longer trembles in view of his peril, for he can say, *O, Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away.* He is no longer an alien from God, but a child, an heir: and *the Spirit itself beareth witness of the new and exalted relation which he now sustains to the King of kings and the Lord of lords.* So great a transformation has been wrought that it is called a new birth, and he is said to be *born again, born from above, born of God.* Because he is in Christ, he is declared to be *a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.* *And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.* The children of God are said to be *a*

chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that they should show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvelous light. Thus the divine word describes the great transition.

In regard to the relation which the penitent believer sustains to God there is little room for controversy. He is a child of God and an heir of heaven. Living, the divine smile is upon him; dying, he goes to be forever with the Lord. Living or dying, he is the Lord's. But while he is yet on earth, there are promises and exhortations in regard to the new life within him which may well arrest his attention, and fill his soul with lofty aspirations. He is urged not to rest content with the beginnings of the

Christian life, but to *go on unto perfection, to grow up into Christ in all things,* and from a *child* become a *man*; and having Christ dwelling in his heart by faith, and *being rooted and grounded in love, to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;* and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fullness of God. To all who are born of God it is said, *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.* These expressions certainly point to things beyond, to possibilities of attainment which are in advance of all that the beginner has yet known. What, then, are these possibilities of the new life? To those who are entering the promised realm of rest, it would seem that *there remaineth yet very*

much land to be possessed. Where lies the goodly heritage? Where is the way by which we shall go up? What enemies beset the path, and with what weapons shall we fight them? By what token shall we know when we begin to tread its richest soil?

The Methodist Churches, both in England and America, hold, and have always held, the doctrine of Christian Perfection. The Methodist Episcopal Church has never faltered in its advocacy. Our standard theological works teach it, and scarcely a year passes without some new publication on the subject. Before a minister can be received into Conference membership he is called upon to answer, before God and his brethren—and is expected to answer in the affirmative, too—these three questions: “Are you

going on to perfection? Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life? Are you groaning after it?" We answer these questions affirmatively, and think that we are sincere; but how few feel assured that they have gained the gracious state? Hardly one in twenty of our ministers professes it, either publicly or privately, so far as I can learn. We preach it occasionally; but among our people its confessors are still fewer, in proportion to numbers, than in the ministry. Even among our bishops, from 1784 to the present day, confessors are as hard to find as in any other class of our people. The very princes of our Israel have been silent in regard to their own experience of it. The apostolic Wesley never professed it. In the sixty-fourth year of his age, and the forty-

second of his ministry, he published, in one of the leading journals of London, a letter containing these words: "I have told all the world *I am not perfect*; I have not *attained* the character I draw." Bishop Asbury, who, if possible, exceeded Wesley in the toils and sufferings of his faithful ministry, did not profess it. The saintly Hedding, approaching the grave by lingering disease, always calm, and often joyous in view of death, was importuned to profess it, and declined. Myriads of men and women among us, whose lives were bright with holy light, saints of whom the world was not worthy, never professed it. A few have done it in the past, a few do it at the present time; but we cannot hide the fact that they are very few, compared with the multitudes who do not.

And why are they so few? Such a state of things, on so vital a point, and one to which attention has been called so often and so earnestly, must have a cause of corresponding magnitude. The Church, as a body, is indeed living at a lower level than it ought; but when was it otherwise? The twelve, chosen by Christ himself, had a Judas among them. The general Church was no purer in apostolic times than it is among us at the present day. In our own branch of it, so far as I can learn, gross offenses against the laws of morality occur less frequently than in former times. Our people—the poor in their poverty as well as the rich in their abundance—never gave of their substance so freely for all good purposes as now. Where is the missionary-field which has been aban-

doned because none could be found to face its perils? Our oldest and most observant ministers tell us that former times were no better than these. No; it is not because the Church has fallen from her steadfastness. Planted as she is by *the rivers of waters*, she ought to have stretched up into loftier stature, and spread abroad a richer crown of foliage; still, the blight and the mildew are not upon her. Boasting is excluded; but we are not yet called to hang our harps upon the willows, and mourn over the waste places of our Zion. Why, then, has this doctrine so small a place in the preaching of the ministry, and the experience of both ministry and people?



CHAPTER II.

WESLEY'S SEARCH AFTER TRUTH.

THE problem is not easily solved. It is not probable that any one mind can solve it to the satisfaction of all others. This, however, need not deter the humblest lover of Zion from uttering his opinion. On the contrary, it lays upon him an increasing obligation to do it. The thought which he utters, even if it be not the truth for which search is made, may suggest the truth to some more fortunate explorer, just as certain rocks, of little value in themselves, guide the geologist to the veins of treasure beneath.

I am persuaded that the piety of the Church has suffered loss, and serious

injury has been done, by inaccurate representations of precious truths. This will, perhaps, be best shown by a somewhat extended sketch of the doctrine of Christian Perfection, as taught among the Methodists.

Mr. Wesley, in a letter written long afterward, tells us that early in his religious life he "began to see that Christians are called to love God with all their heart, and serve him with all their strength, which," he adds, "is precisely what I apprehend to be meant by the scriptural term perfection. After weighing this for some years, I openly declared my sentiments before the University in the sermon on the 'Circumcision of the Heart.' About six years after, in consequence of an advice I received from Bishop Gibson, 'Tell all the world what

you mean by perfection,' I published my coolest and latest thoughts in a sermon on that subject."

Here, then, we have the distinct statement that what Mr. Wesley, at least as late as the year 1756, the date of the letter alluded to, believed in regard to Christian Perfection, he advanced in the sermon on the "Circumcision of the Heart," in 1733, and repeated, perhaps more accurately, in the sermon on "Christian Perfection," in 1740. In the first sermon he preaches the doctrine that "the distinguishing mark of a true follower of Christ, of one who is in a state of acceptance with God," is a "circumcision of the heart," "which," he proceeds to say, "is that habitual disposition of soul which in the sacred writings is termed Holiness, and which directly implies the being

cleansed from sin; from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit." It will be observed that he gives this exalted description, not of the mature Christian, but of the Christian who is "in a state of acceptance with God;" and he expressly repels the claims of all others to be Christians.

Six years or so afterward, as he tells us, seeing that his views had been misunderstood and misrepresented, he published the sermon on "Christian Perfection," which was designed to be a full and accurate statement in regard to the transformations which grace works in the heart of the true believer. This statement he styles, in 1756, "his coolest and latest thoughts" on the subject of Christian Perfection. What, then, were the fixed opinions of John Wesley on this

important subject in 1756, twenty-three years after the sermon before the University, and only five or six years before the great agitation in regard to Holiness which forms so remarkable an era in the early history of Wesleyan Methodism?

In this sermon Mr. Wesley first shows in what sense Christians are not perfect. They are not free from ignorance, nor from the mistakes which originate in ignorance; nor from infirmities; nor from temptations; but there is not one word in this part of the sermon in regard to the removal of the remains of the sinful nature, no allusion to any residue of depravity left in the soul in the hour when it is born of God.

In the second part of the discourse, in which Mr. Wesley shows in what sense he holds that Christians may be perfect,

he devotes six and a half pages, exactly one half of the sermon, to a definition of what he terms “the glorious privilege of every Christian ; yea, though he be but a *babe* in Christ.” And what is this glorious privilege? In Mr. Wesley’s own words it is to be “so far perfect as not to commit sin.” This conclusion, he declares, is “in conformity to the whole tenor of the New Testament.” Arguing the point at length, adducing the passages of Scripture which he deems proof of the doctrine, and explaining those which might appear to be against it, he reaches the deliberate conclusion that whosoever is born of God is so far perfect as not to commit sin.

What, then, is the additional grace, the distinguishing characteristic, of “the perfect man,” who has grown up to *the*

measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ? It would seem that Mr. Wesley has placed the state of the babe in Christ so high that it must be hard to point out differences between the two; to show the practical advantages of the perfect Christian, without depreciating those of the soul just born of God. He did find a real difficulty in drawing the line, and especially in maintaining it, clearly and distinctly, in the minds of his people.

In this sermon he says that the mature Christian is "so far perfect as to be freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers." He admits that the perfect man has temptations of various kinds, but says that he overcomes them. But this is exactly the same thing which he affirms of the babe in Christ. Both are subject to tempta-

tions, and both have the victory, and sin not. The only real distinction affecting the question of practical obedience to God is, therefore, a theoretical one. He assumes that the babe in Christ has still an evil nature, a source of temptation within, from which the mature Christian is delivered. The perfect man can say with Paul : "*I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*" "Words," he adds, that manifestly describe a deliverance from inward as well as from outward sin."

But if both the babe in Christ and the perfect man are assaulted by temptations and overcome them, and are free from sin, what matters it whence the temptations come? What advantage has the mature over the beginner in the matter of practical obedience?

Wesley himself manifestly fails to maintain his theoretical distinctions in regard to the two classes of Christians. In his sermon on the "New Birth" he defines it to be "that great change which God works in the soul when he brings it into life; when he raises it from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. It is the change wrought in the whole soul by the almighty Spirit of God when it is created anew in Christ Jesus; when it is renewed after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness; when the love of the world is changed into the love of God; pride into humility; passion into meekness; hatred, envy, malice, into a sincere, tender, disinterested love for all mankind. In a word, it is that change whereby the earthly, sensual, devilish mind is turned

into the mind which was in Christ Jesus."

Here the state of every one born of God is portrayed in such exalted terms as to make it difficult to describe any higher state of grace.

Again, in his sermon on "Patience," published in 1785, he describes the new birth in these glowing words: "There is, in that hour, a general change from inward sinfulness to inward holiness. The love of the creature is changed to the love of the Creator; the love of the world into the love of God. Earthly desires, the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life, are, in that instant, changed by the mighty power of God. The whirlwind of our will is stopped in its mid career, and sinks down into the will of God.

Pride and haughtiness subside into lowliness of heart; as does anger, with all turbulent and unruly passions, into calmness, meekness, and gentleness."

In the earlier part of Mr. Wesley's ministry, he said comparatively little in regard to Christian perfection. The burden of his sermons was sin, the atonement, salvation by faith, Christian duty, and the exalted privileges of all who are born of God. Still, he saw the term Perfection in the Scripture, and believed a state of grace to be designated thereby which is attainable and desirable. He seems, however, to have believed that it was the result of growth, and of long and faithful service; and that few attain it till a little before they leave the world. Thus, in his sermon on the "New Birth," he says that "it is undeniably true" that

sanctification is “a progressive work, carried on in the soul by slow degrees, from the time of our first turning to God.”

At the Conference of 1745 the subject was considered, and the following conclusions reached ; that although sanctification is not ordinarily attained till a little before death, and Paul himself was not sanctified when he wrote his first epistles, we ought to expect it sooner. It was agreed that sanctification should scarcely be preached at all to those who are not pressing forward ; and when it is preached, it should always be done by way of promise—by drawing rather than driving. In regard to the way in which this religious state should be sought, it was decided that “the *general* means which God has ordained for our

receiving his sanctifying grace are, keeping all his commandments, denying ourselves and taking up our cross daily; and that the *particular* are prayer, searching the Scriptures, fasting," and partaking of the Lord's Supper. This was the way, and the only way, which Wesley and his preachers at that time felt at liberty to recommend.

About this same date Mr. Wesley found several members of his societies who professed to have attained Christian Perfection. In 1744 he conversed with two persons in London who said that they were "saved from all sin." It is very clear that he was at a loss what to think of the experience which they related. He writes: "Why do I not rejoice and praise God" in behalf of such? "Perhaps because I have an exceedingly

complex idea of sanctification, or a sanctified man." He concludes, however, that whether they are saved from all sin or not, it is right to rejoice in every evidence of their true piety. The next year, 1745, he met two or three at Bristol, and two or three more at Kingswood, who made the same profession.

At the Conference of 1747 the question was again discussed, and the conclusion was formally recorded that the inspired writers rarely either address or mention those who are entirely sanctified; and therefore it behooves the ministry, in public, at least, rarely to speak in full and explicit terms concerning entire sanctification. All this shows that Wesley's opinions on the subject were up to this date exceedingly indefinite, if not perplexed.



CHAPTER III.

A NEW DEPARTURE, AND NEW QUESTIONS.

IT is not given to any one man to discover *all truth*. One lays the foundation, others build upon it. One man, like the Genoese explorer, guided by a half truth, commits himself to unknown seas, and discovers a new continent; but years elapse, and the aid of other busy minds is invoked, before the outlines of the new world are traced, and its dimensions known. Wesley's contributions to the practical religious thought of the age are invaluable. The doctrinal system which he taught is steadily gaining ground in all directions, and the indica-

tions seem to be that it will ultimately become the faith of the general Church. Still, amid the incessant toils of his ministry he could not be expected to complete all that he began. Moreover, fearless as he was in the search after truth, he was also conservative, and relinquished an old opinion with great reluctance, especially if he found it incorporated in the teachings of the Church of England.

Taking all these things into consideration, it is not matter of surprise to find that Mr. Wesley's views of Christian Perfection were not well defined at the beginning, nor even at the end; and that his various utterances, scattered, as they are, over a space of fifty years, furnish no complete and consistent theory on the subject. He evidently began with-

out a theory, without any labored attempt to show the place which Christian Perfection holds in the Christian system, or to trace its outlines with accuracy. He said, in 1756, that in his sermon on the "Circumcision of the Heart," preached before the University in 1733, is contained all that he ever taught in regard to the doctrine of Perfection; but he predicates the character which he describes of every "true follower of Christ," every one "in a state of acceptance with God." It seems not to have occurred to his mind at that time, what he was understood afterward to teach, that the state of grace which he thus describes belongs only to mature Christians, and that the great mass of the true followers of Christ are far below this standard.

After a time he began to feel the necessity of recognizing St. John's distinction between "little children" and "fathers"—the babe in Christ and the mature Christian; and then he employed the term Perfection to designate the attainments of the mature Christian only. The sermon on the "Circumcision of the Heart" gives no hint of two distinct classes of true believers. Mr. Wesley saw the necessity of greater accuracy of statement, and therefore, in 1740, in the sermon on "Christian Perfection," sought to draw the line. He still held that the babe in Christ is "so far perfect as not to commit sin;" but represents the "perfect man" as occupying a higher position, in that he is delivered from "evil thoughts and evil tempers." But even in this very sermon, he ever and anon

forgets the line which he is trying to draw, declaring that "every one that hath Christ in him the hope of glory, purifieth himself even as he is pure," and stating, as the conclusion of all his reasonings, that "*Christians* are saved in this world from all sin, from all unrighteousness; that they are now in such a sense perfect as not to commit sin, and to be freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers." He admits, however, that "they may have thoughts of evil," and may also feel anger, though not "in the common sense of that word." At this period, and for years afterward, Mr. Wesley's idea of Perfection seems to have been that it is the maturity of the Christian graces, the result of growth, the fruit of long and faithful service.

But it was an age of controversy; and

soon Wesley found his doctrine assailed from various quarters. His devoted friend, the famous Whitefield, wrote to tell him how sorry he was to hear that Mr. Wesley was teaching that a "sinless perfection" is attainable in this life. "There must be," said he, "some Amalekites left in the Israelite's land to keep his soul in action, to keep him humble, and to drive him continually to Jesus Christ for pardon." Wesley, doubtless, smiled at the absurd idea of sin's being a remedy for sin; but an argument from another quarter could not be disposed of with a smile. He was strongly attached to the Church of England, and open and emphatic in his declaration of loyalty to it. And the Ninth of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion declares that "Original Sin is the corruption of the nature of

every man ;" "and this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated." In adjusting his teachings to the doctrine of this Ninth Article, he was under the necessity of admitting that at least something of the old corruption of nature may remain in those who are "born of God," and who are "so far perfect as not to commit sin."

No sooner was this conclusion clearly apprehended than it gave rise to questions which could not fail deeply to interest all who were hungering and thirsting for righteousness. How long must this "infection of nature" remain in the soul? Must we contend with this inward foe all our lives? The article quoted does not answer these questions; and Wesley, on the basis of certain passages of Scripture, concluded that although

the great majority of Christians are not saved from it "till a little before death," and even "Paul was not when he wrote his first epistles," yet no such limitation exists, either in the Scriptures or in practical Christian experience; and complete holiness of the inner nature as well as of action may be attained and enjoyed in this life. Here was, at last, something on which to found a clear distinction between the two classes of believers; and the babe in Christ was described as one in whom "inborn sin" was not yet wholly destroyed; while the "perfect man in Christ Jesus" was entirely freed from it.

But the instant this conclusion is reached it becomes the starting-point of new questions. Is deliverance from "the seeds of sin" desirable? Most assuredly. What, then, are the condi-

tions of success in seeking this grace? What states of mind must precede? Do we grow into it by patient obedience, or seize it at once by an act of faith? What evidences accompany the grace when attained? It was impossible to evade these questions. He who teaches that depravity remains even in the regenerate soul, but that he may be freed from it, and that freedom from it is of priceless value, must tell how deliverance is to be secured. Thus, little by little, the theory of a second distinct work grew up, and assumed what I cannot but regard as an unscriptural form.

It began to be taught, first, that the conviction of remaining depravity must precede entire sanctification, just as conviction for sin precedes justification. Thus Wesley, in his sermon on "Patience,"

says that the true believer grows in holiness as he grows in faith, "till it pleases God, after he is thoroughly convinced of inbred sin, of the total corruption of his nature, to take it all away." Vol. ii, p. 222. It was taught, secondly, that this great grace is to be sought by faith, and is attainable at any moment. Thus Wesley, in 1785, wrote to Rev. Freeborn Garrettson: "The more explicitly and strongly you press all believers to aspire after full salvation, as attainable now by simple faith, the more the whole work of God will prosper." Wesley declared, thirdly, that the one who is entirely sanctified may have "the testimony of the Spirit, witnessing his entire sanctification as clearly as his justification;" and that, in fact, no one ought to profess it till he has this divine witness. Thus the

mode of representing the doctrine became logically complete.

It is clear that these three points were new to Wesley himself, and were not taught by him until many years after he began his ministry. The sermon on the Circumcision of the Heart shows no trace of them; nor does the sermon on Christian Perfection. Dr. Whitehead, the biographer of Wesley, says: "Though Mr. Wesley had so long held the doctrine of Christian Perfection, he had not always held that this state of mind might be attained in one moment; much less that a person might attain it in his novitiate; nor do I know that there were any professors of it before 1760, except when death was approaching." He also says that "the manner in which it was now preached, pressing the people to expect

what was called the destruction of the root of sin, in one moment, was most certainly new. I can find no trace of it before the period at which I have fixed its introduction." In point of time, then, the general inculcation of these new ideas on the subject of Perfection agrees with the occurrence of the singular events which we shall soon narrate.

But we must confess that to the last Mr. Wesley's methods of stating and enforcing the doctrine were indefinite. Some things would seem to indicate that in the latter part of his life he was disposed to abandon the residue theory. When he prepared, in 1784, the Articles of Religion, which he wished the American Methodist Church to adopt, he copied the first part of the Ninth Article of the Church of England, but rejected

the latter part, which declares that the “infection of nature” remains in the regenerate.

The next year, 1785, only six years before his death, he published his sermon on “Perfection,” which, therefore, may be regarded as his final judgment on that subject. And in this sermon he says not a word about “inbred sin” or “the seeds of sin” in believers. He defines perfection, negatively, to be salvation from all sin. But he says in this very sermon, in two different places, emphasizing the words by the use of italics, that by “sin” he means “*a voluntary transgression of a known law.*” This he calls “my sense of the word,” “which I apprehend to be the scriptural definition of it.” Defined positively, Perfection is explained to be the maturity of the

Christian graces, the completeness of the Christian character. This he regards as the best part of the work wrought, saying that salvation from all sin is "only the least, the lowest branch of it." Thus he resolves Christian Perfection into two elements, to wit, freedom from transgression, and the maturity of the Christian graces. This looks like an abandonment of all former views in regard to the inner work wrought; and we should so construe it, were it not for the utterances in the sermon on "Patience," already quoted, which belongs to the previous year, 1784.



CHAPTER IV.

A SAD AND SINGULAR HISTORY.

ABOUT the year 1758 some of the preachers began to give Christian Perfection a more prominent place in their sermons, and now and then, it would seem, deprecated justification and its concomitants in order to exalt sanctification. One was accused of saying that all who are not entirely sanctified are under the curse of God; another, that if any one dies before he has attained perfection he surely perishes. These errors Wesley deemed it expedient to repudiate in a published letter, and also in the Conference Minutes.

The subject was canvassed in the conference of that year, and the result was two conclusions: 1. That "those who think they have attained" that state of grace should speak of it "with great wariness." 2. That young preachers, especially, should not speak in public of perfection "too minutely or circumstantially, but rather in general and scriptural terms." Most young men, thus admonished by the highest ecclesiastical authority to which they are subject, would hardly deem it prudent for them to attempt the subject at all.

In 1761 an agitation began in regard to Christian Perfection and swept through the societies like a mighty wave of the ocean. In the beginning it seemed to promise great good; but the ebb of the tide was as sudden and overwhelming as

the flow, and the result disastrous. Why was the work unsound, and the effect bad? I cannot resist the conviction that it was because it was based upon unsound principles. It is certain that about this time there was a change in the modes of explaining and enforcing the doctrine.

The Conference of 1745 defined the means of attaining Christian Perfection to be earnest obedience to all God's commandments, and the diligent use of all the appointed means of grace. Now the idea began to prevail that entire sanctification, or Christian Perfection, can be attained at once by an act of faith at any time, not only by the veteran who has long been growing and ripening in the graces of the Spirit, but by the convert of yesterday. The doctrine

began to be preached, as we have seen, that before the regenerate man can be made altogether holy he must be "thoroughly convinced of inbred sin, of the total corruption of his nature ;" that it is the privilege of those who are entirely sanctified to have the testimony of the Spirit, witnessing their entire sanctification as clearly as their justification ; and that none ought to profess it till they have this divine evidence. That these last-named features of the doctrine are scriptural I see no proof; but whether true or erroneous, they are evidently exceedingly liable to abuse. They were generally preached, however, and a general agitation followed. During the year 1759, and for two or three years succeeding, great attention was paid to the doctrine of Perfection, and the pro-

fessors of this state of grace were numerous beyond all former example. In fact, the profession up to this time had been almost unknown. Wesley, as we have seen, conversed in 1744 with two persons who professed to be saved from all sin ; but he evidently was at a loss in regard to the value to be attached to their experience, whether to consider it real or imaginary. Now, professors were numbered by hundreds and thousands, and were found, not only in London, Bristol, and other large cities, but in the remotest parts of the work. Mr. Wesley went to London to examine the matter for himself, and found, as he says, " six hundred and fifty-two members who were exceedingly clear in their experience, and whose testimony he could see no reason to doubt." The societies in that city num-

bered, in 1762, twenty-three hundred and fifty members.

But soon roots of bitterness appeared. George Bell, who had professed conversion three years before, professed entire sanctification in March, 1761, and immediately began to hold independent meetings, in his own way declaring that no one could teach the sanctified except those who were themselves in that state of grace; and that God was to be found only among these his saints. Thomas Maxfield, one of Wesley's first preachers, and for a time one of the best, adopted the same views and helped on the mischief. Wesley went to see him, and even attended some of his meetings; he wrote to Bell warning him not to depreciate justification as he had been doing, and then tried with rare patience and

forbearance to avert disaster, but in vain. Bell at last turned prophet, and declared that the world would come to an end on the 28th of February, 1763. Wesley felt compelled to forbid his exhibiting his vagaries in the meetings of the Wesleyan societies. Then came rupture and wreck. Maxfield and Bell formed a new society of their peculiar followers, and denounced Wesley as one incapable of teaching them anything. One of the seceders called him a hypocrite; another accused him of being an enemy of the doctrine of Holiness; a third heard him preach, and then said that if the devil had been in the pulpit he would not have preached such a sermon. Still, large numbers of those who professed sanctification remained faithful, and, for a time at least, were not moved from

their steadfastness. Maxfield carried off about two hundred members of the London society, founded an independent congregation and continued to minister to them for twenty years, and then died. Bell, when his prophecies in regard to the end of the world were proved false, not only gave up the office of prophet, but abandoned all pretense of religion went into politics, and died an infidel.

Meanwhile Wesley was laboring earnestly and patiently to save all he could from the delusion. The great mass of his people, both preachers and members, were still steadfast in their piety, and loyal to him as their pastor; but the minds of preachers and people were much disturbed in regard to the doctrine which had been perverted into such an instrument of evil. Wesley had the sa-

gacity to see just where one abuse began. These wild teachers had sought to advance the work of entire sanctification by depreciating the religious state of all who failed to attain and profess it. They talked as if to be born of God is nothing; as if those who are able to profess nothing more than this ought to hide their heads with shame, and contemplate their religious condition with sorrow and alarm.

Wesley employed the press to correct the evil. He published in 1763 his sermon on "Sin in Believers," a sermon whose full import we see only when we read it in connection with the times and circumstances. It was evidently written, not to discourage those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness, but to cheer those whose hearts have been

made sad by false doctrines ; who have been told, with all assurance, that so long as they detect the presence of an evil thought in their souls, no matter whence it comes, or how promptly and utterly they reject it, they are in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. He held as firmly as ever, and asserts it in this very sermon, that *he who is born of God doth not commit sin.* But if this be so, then the pride, anger, love of the world, which he says may still be in the heart of the believer, are simply *temptations* to pride, anger, and love of the world. Bell and the other enthusiasts professed to have become so holy that they were out of the reach of these temptations, and denounced all who failed to attain the same fancied heights. Not content with a second work of grace by

which, as they claimed, their hearts were wholly purified from evil tempers, they began to profess a third, by which their minds, they said, were lifted above the reach of evil thoughts. Wesley's sermon on "Sin in Believers" is designed to be a refutation of these unscriptural notions.

Wesley also went to London, and by his personal presence and counsels sought to save his people from the destructive effects of religious error, this "high strained perfection," as he calls it in one of his letters. He spent a whole week in October, 1763, endeavoring "to confirm those who had been shaken as to the important doctrine of Christian Perfection, either by its wild defenders or wise opposers." He succeeded in great part in saving his Societies; but there were widespread and permanent effects

which he could not prevent. The follies and excesses of Bell, Maxfield, and their followers, created alarm in some minds, and prejudice in others; and a glorious doctrine was sorely wounded in the house of its friends. The preachers became afraid to teach it. In May, 1764, Wesley wrote to his brother that "the frightful stories written from London had made all the preachers in the North afraid even to mutter about perfection, and of course the people on all sides were grown good Calvinists on that point." He adds: "It is what I foresaw from the beginning; that the devil would strive by Thomas Maxfield and company to drive perfection out of the kingdom."

Some of the professors of entire sanctification maintained their position.

Wesley said, a year later, that he thought he knew five hundred witnesses of it, but as a body they gave way in all directions. In his annual visitations in 1765 he found that about two thirds had ceased to profess it. In 1770 he writes that of those who professed to obtain sanctification hardly one in thirty retained it. The defection in the London society, much under his own care, was as bad as in other places. Of the hundreds who had been partakers of the blessing, he doubted, he said, "whether twenty are now as holy and as happy as they were." Even Mary Bosanquet, who afterward became the wife of the saintly Fletcher, had lost her confidence and ceased to be a witness. Charles Wesley was so pained by the scandal which grew out of the operations of Bell and his disciples that

he took a position which was construed into opposition to the whole doctrine. John Wesley himself was perplexed and distressed. Dr. Dodd, one of his clerical opponents, said in one of his publications: "A Methodist, according to Mr. Wesley, is one who is perfect, and sin-neth not in thought, word, or deed." Wesley replied to this, "Sir, have me excused. I have told all the world, *I am not perfect*; and yet you allow me to be a *Methodist*. I tell you flat, *I have not attained* the character I draw. Will you pin it upon me in spite of my teeth?" Nor did he, to the latest day of his life, make any public profession, nor, as far as can now be ascertained, any private profession of the kind. The letter to Dr. Dodd is dated March 26

In May, 1768, he writes to Charles Wesley a letter of six pithy lines :

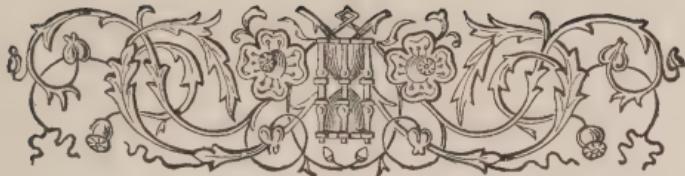
“ I am at my wit’s end in regard to two things: the Church and Christian Perfection. Unless you and I both stand in the gap in good earnest the Methodists will drop both. Talking will not avail. We must *do*, or be borne away. Will you set shoulder to shoulder? If so, think deeply upon the matter, and tell me what can be done. *Age, vir esto!* *Nervos intendas tuos.* Peace be with you and yours.”

Four years afterward (1772) he again writes to Charles Wesley on the same subject, and in the same strain : “ I find almost all our preachers, in every circuit, have done with Christian Perfection. They say they believe it, but they never preach it, or not once in a quarter

What is to be done? Shall we let it drop, or make a point of it?" In his 'Plain Account of Christian Perfection,' published in its final revision in 1777, he says: "We ask once for all, Shall we defend this Perfection, or give it up?" In 1762 the professors of this state of grace were numbered by thousands. In 1765 Wesley says that he thought he knew five hundred who professed it. In 1785 he writes: "SEVERAL persons have enjoyed this blessing without any interruption for many years. SEVERAL enjoy it at this day."—*Sermon on Perfection.*

This is a sad page of history. Fidelity to my own convictions, and the candor which the reader has a right to expect, impel me to say I am persuaded that it never need have been written, if the teachings which preceded and ac-

companied these strange events had been wholly clear and scriptural. Nor need we reflect on Mr. Wesley. Few men, in all human history, have sought for truth more diligently; none with a more honest heart; none with greater aggregate success.



CHAPTER V.

THE ERROR, AND ARGUMENTS AGAINST IT.

WE have often seen a mountain stream whose bright waters flowed on like liquid crystal till some little rivulet, stirred up by passing herds, poured in its muddy current and made the whole river turbid. Whence comes this turbidness of the Wesleyan stream? I accord most heartily in a sentiment of Bishop Foster, that "no one can properly investigate a subject, or even successfully examine the researches of another, until his mind, in relation to truth, is as the needle to the pole, ready to follow it whatever its direction." Sincerely endeavoring to search for the

truth, I find my convictions settling in a certain direction. It seems to me that Mr. Wesley's anxiety to explain his position, so as to accord with the latter part of the Ninth Article of the Church of England, led him into manifold error. That article teaches that original sin is "the fault or corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil," . . . "and this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated." There is no controversy among us in regard to the truth of the doctrine of natural depravity; but where is the proof that this "infection of nature" remains in the regenerate, the soul which is "born of God?" That one

born of God and made a new creature is still depraved, earthly, sensual, and devilish, is a startling proposition. It requires positive proof before it can be accepted.

The antecedent probabilities seem wholly against it. It looks strange that when the penitent comes, with his broken, trusting heart, to the Saviour, that he should do for him only half that needs to be done. Not so did Christ in his acts of healing while on earth. When the blind came, saying, *Lord, that I might receive my sight,* Christ did not cure one eye, and then require a new repentance and a new act of faith before he touched the other. When he healed the lame, it was not by a partial cure which sent him away limping. And if, as we all believe, the same act of faith

secured the pardon of sin and the regeneration of the soul, why should the inner salvation be less thorough than the outward? When Lazarus was raised from his grave, it was to vigorous life. He came not forth weak, faint, diseased, requiring a litter to convey him home. Instead of calling for careful hands to bear him tenderly to his house, Christ said, *Loose him, and let him go.* Can we suppose that Christ's power over spiritual death is less complete than over natural death?

If at conversion a residue of depravity is left in the soul, for what purpose is it left? Shall we adopt the hypothesis of Whitefield, that some Amalekites must be left in the land to keep Israel humble? In all that God has revealed of himself, or of his plans, I see nothing that ex-

plains why the “seeds of sin” should be left in the regenerate. Every reason that calls for the removal of half of the depravity, requires the removal of the whole of it.

And if a residue of corruption remains in him who is born of God, is it not an enemy within? Does it not chill love, mar obedience, hinder devotion, render temptations more numerous and more dangerous, and hang as a weight upon the soul in all its motions? And is not the babe in Christ weak, unskilled in the wiles of the adversary, and new to all the duties of the new life? Why must he set out, in his weakness, with this burden upon him? Wherefore must he begin his heavenward flight with a broken wing? Surely he who half cleanses the heart can make it wholly clean; and all

that we know of the character of God would cause us to expect him to complete the work at once.

One of the set arguments, on the residue hypothesis, to prove the possibility of the removal of the “seeds of sin,” is that, if this residue cannot be removed, then its remaining is man’s misfortune, not his fault. This argument, whatever its value in other directions, is fatal to the hypothesis on which it is based. Can it be that a man born of God is, when the divine work is wrought, left in a state which compels us to pronounce him either unfortunate or guilty?

And again, if a certain residue of depravity remains in the regenerate man, but is removed when he attains entire sanctification, what will be his condition if he relapses from entire sanctification to

mere justification again? Does exactly the former fraction of the old nature return, or more, or less? Surely a theory which so militates against all which we might with apparent reason expect, needs very positive proof, a good foundation in Scripture declaration and example. Is it true, then, that "this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated?" I am free to confess my doubt, and to set forth briefly some of the reasons which compel me to doubt.

I. The residue theory is not supported by sufficient Scripture evidence.

If there is one single passage of Scripture which directly asserts that one born of God, and in a normal condition as a regenerated soul, still has a degree of depravity in him, where is that passage? It is really surprising that a doctrine

should go so long unquestioned, when its ablest adherents show so scanty an array of Scripture and prove so little by it. Wesley, in his sermon on "Sin in Believers," written to counteract the abuses of 1763, has been generally understood as advocating the residue theory; but it must be confessed that his exact meaning is somewhat difficult to determine.

Dr. Whedon, discussing this subject, remarks:—

"When we are asked, peremptorily, *Yes* or *No*, whether Abraham, when justified by God, was still a sinner, we answer *No* and *Yes*. *No*, so far as his past guilt and present acceptance are concerned. *Yes*, so far as his full capability for future sin is concerned. . . . And that liability to sinning would be what Mr. Wesley would, as we understand, mean by the figure,

‘Sin in a believer.’”—*Rev.*, 1874, p. 684. If this be the real doctrine of the Sermon, I fully accept it. Mr. Wesley himself thus describes the aim of the discourse:—

“I retired to Lewisham, and wrote the sermon on ‘Sin in Believers,’ in order to remove a mistake which some were laboring to propagate—that there is no sin in any that are justified.”—*Journal*, March, 1763.

If the note in Mr. Wesley’s Journal fully expresses the doctrine of the sermon, I fully accept it. But to refute the notion that “there is no sin in any that are justified,” is one thing; and to prove that there is sin in all that are merely justified, is quite another, and the sermon has been construed in the latter sense. Still, while it is interesting to inquire

precisely what Wesley was aiming to prove, there is another question far more important, and that is, What did he prove? To refute the error which he names, he cites six passages of Scripture.

He first quotes Gal. v, 17: *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* He says that in these words Paul is “speaking to believers, and describing the state of believers in general.” How can this be when the very first remark he makes to the Galatians is that he *marvels that they are so soon removed from him that called them into the grace of Christ unto another gospel?* He calls them *foolish*, censures them for *biting and devouring one another*, and assures them that they

are fallen from grace. But in this very sermon Mr. Wesley tells us that those who are justified, and living in the grace given in justification, "have power both over outward and inward sin." Consequently the Galatians, whom Paul warns, had lost ground in religion. They had fallen so far as to commit actual sin. This surely cannot be the spiritual condition of "believers in general," according to Wesley. On the contrary, he delights to dwell on the "inexpressibly great and glorious state" of those who are justified, quoting triumphantly the words of John, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.* Assuming that the word *flesh*, as Paul here employs it, implies moral depravity, it is applied to the Galatians only in connection with reproof for actual sin committed. Consequently

this passage cannot be cited as evidence that depravity remains in all the regenerate.

He next quotes First Corinthians iii, 1, 3, 4: *And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. . . . Ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*

Paul declares that he wrote to the Church at Corinth *with anguish of heart and many tears*, to rebuke them for their open sins against God. He calls them carnal, and tells them the reason why. There were *envy, strife, and divisions among them*. Having fallen into open sin, their spiritual state was far below the privileges of those who are born of

God. Dr. Clarke interprets the latter part of the third verse thus: "Ye act just as the people of the world, and have no more of the spirit of religion than they." Certainly, if the Corinthians were real believers, they were not believers in a normal state of grace. Paul's *babes in Christ* (*νηπίοι*) must not be confounded with John's *little children*, (*τεκνία, παιδία.*) John's epithet is one of endearment, Paul's is a term of reproach; as if he had said, in English, "When you ought in piety to be men, you are only babies."

He cites Second Corinthians vii, 1 : *Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

This exhortation was written to these same Corinthians within a few months

after the admonitions already examined. Wesley thus explains the purport of it : “*Let us cleanse ourselves from all pollution of the flesh, all outward sin ; and of the spirit, all inward.*” *Notes in loco.* If the apostle, then, was referring to the actual condition of the Corinthians, it is evident that they were still *fallen from grace*. But if we hold the early Christians guilty of all the sins against which they are warned, we make worse *havoc of the Church* than did Saul. For example: Timothy is exhorted by name to *flee youthful lusts*. Is this to be construed as evidence that he was given to youthful lusts? The Christians of Rome are admonished to beware of *rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness*. Does this show that they were addicted to those vices? Nay, Paul includes him-

self in this very exhortation given to the Corinthians. *Let us cleanse ourselves.* Does *Paul the aged*, now in the twenty-sixth year of his ministry, and only six years before his martyrdom, confess that he himself is not yet cleansed from the things of which he warns others?

Lastly, Mr. Wesley quotes *what the Spirit saith unto the Churches* of Ephesus, Pergamos, and Sardis. To the first it is said, *I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.* The Church at Pergamos is commanded to *repent, or else God would come quickly, and fight* against them. The Church at Sardis is exhorted to *strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.* Surely admonitions and threats, addressed to Churches that have left their first love, and fallen into sin, and

whose piety is ready to die, do not show that a residue of depravity remains in those who are *faithful unto death*.

The very utmost that Wesley proves by these citations is that Christians are liable to fall into temptation, sin, and danger; but that even when they begin to decline from the way, the all-merciful God may bear with them for a time, that they may *repent, and do their first works*.

II. The general tenor of Scripture opposes the idea that partial depravity is the normal condition of the regenerate.

He who is born of God is said to be a new man. *Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given*

to us the ministry of reconciliation. 2 Cor. v, 17-18.

Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. Rom. vi, 18.

But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. Rom. vi, 22.

Paul exhorts the Ephesians to put off the old man, which is corrupt, and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Eph. iv, 22-24.

In almost identical language he describes the Colossians as those who have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. Col. iii, 9, 10.

John Wesley's description of the *new man* is entirely correct and scriptural :

"We allow that the state of a justified person is inexpressibly great and glorious. He is born again, 'not of blood, nor of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' He is a child of God, a member of Christ, an heir of the kingdom of heaven. 'The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keepeth his heart and mind in Christ Jesus.' His very body is a 'temple of the Holy Ghost,' and a 'habitation of God through the Spirit.' He is 'created anew in Christ Jesus.' He is washed, he is sanctified. His heart is purified by faith; he is 'cleansed from the corruption that is in the world;' 'the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him.' And so long as he 'walketh

in love' (which he may always do) he worships God in spirit and in truth. He keepeth the commandments of God, and doeth those things that are pleasing in his sight, so exercising himself as to 'have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man;' and he has power both over outward and inward sin, even from the moment he is justified."—*Sermon on Sin in Believers.*

Who would suspect, after hearing this exalted description of the regenerate man, that he needs to be "thoroughly convinced of the total corruption of his nature?" Wesley's portrait of the new man expresses the general tenor of the Scripture. If there is one line in all God's word which clearly warns any believer of the sin that is in him, except in connection with conduct which demands

rebuke or admonition, I confess that I do not know where to find it.

Nor have we any thing in Scripture biography to prove the residue theory. What Old Testament saint, or New Testament Christian, "so far perfect as not to commit sin," was ever distressed about his residuary carnality, or was "thoroughly convinced of the total corruption of his nature," sought deliverance from it as a special act of grace, succeeded, and had the witness of the Spirit that the work was done? One clear, indisputable instance is enough; but where is it?

III. The ablest writers who have discussed these subjects on the residue theory have not been able, in their descriptions of the Christian life, to maintain a clear, practical distinction between

those who are supposed to be simply regenerate, and those who are accounted to be freed from all depravity.

As we have already seen, Mr. Wesley himself fails to keep a clear line of distinction between the two states. He declares that one who is born of God "has power over both outward and inward sin, even from the moment he is justified." In the sermon on 'Patience' he speaks of the new birth, declaring that "there is, in that hour, a general change from inward sinfulness to inward holiness." In his sermon on "Salvation by Faith" he says: "He that is by faith born of God sinneth not by any habitual sin;" "nor by any willful sin;" "nor by any sinful desire;" "nor doth he sin by infirmities, whether in act, word, or thought."

In his "Farther Thoughts on Christian Perfection," published in 1763, he admits that the highest degree attainable on earth will not save a man from mistakes, and that "these mistakes will frequently occasion something wrong, both in our tempers, and words, and actions." Here the religious state of the entirely sanctified man is put below that of one who is simply born of God. He says, in the sermon on the Marks of the New Birth, "A fruit which can in no wise be separated from it, no, not for an hour, is power over sin," inward and outward; "for it purifieth the heart from every unholiness desire and temper." Yet, strange to tell, in his sermon on Christian Perfection, which is a set effort to draw the distinguishing line, he says that the perfect man exceeds the other, in that he

is "freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers."

In his sermon on the Witness of the Spirit, Mr. Wesley affirms that many texts of Scripture, "with the experience of all real Christians, sufficiently evince that there is in every believer both the testimony of God's Spirit and the testimony of his own, that he is a child of God." In his sermon on the Marks of the New Birth, he teaches that among those marks are peace, hope, love, and freedom from sin.

But Bishop Hamline argues at considerable length that it is consistent with an entirely sanctified state for a man to be compelled to say, "Now and then my communion with God is interrupted;" "I suffer inward conflicts;" "I am frequently unconscious of anything like

triumph;" "I am often perplexed in regard to my religious state."—*Works*, vol. ii, p. 347.

Dr. Wakefield defines regeneration to be "an inward and thorough renovation of our being;" that "moral change in man, by which he is saved from the love, the practice, and the dominion of sin, and enabled, with full choice of will, and the energy of right affections, to love God and keep his commandments;" while Entire Sanctification is "entire conformity of heart and life to the will of God, as made known to us in his word."—Pp. 425, 426. Well may he add, that "Entire Sanctification does not differ in essence from Regeneration."—P. 446.

And well may Watson remark, that "the regeneration which accompanies

justification is a large approach to this state of perfected holiness.”—*Institutes*, vol. ii, p. 455.

Bishop Foster explains Entire Sanctification to be the state of one who is “entirely free from sin, properly so called, both inward and outward;” while Mr. Wesley says, that taking the word sin “in its plain, common acceptation,” one born of God does not commit sin; and a greater than he says the same thing. Surely here is some confusion of tongues.

There is great significance in the conclusion to which Mr. Wesley and his preachers came in 1747, that Perfection should be preached by way of promise, “by drawing rather than by driving.” The very moment one attempts to drive, he is logically compelled to disparage the state of justification, and represent

it as somehow unsatisfactory and unsafe. In no other way can a sufficient difference between the two states be shown to justify the driving. Here is just the point where Bell and his fellow-enthusiasts left the true path, and began their career of extravagance and folly. No wonder that Mr. Wesley was unwilling to let the young preachers try to explain in their sermons the exact difference between the two stages of the Christian life. He that can see any marked, practical distinction between the two, as Mr. Wesley himself describes them, must have a little of the Hudibrastic acumen which

“ Could distinguish and divide
A hair 'twixt south and south-west side.”



CHAPTER VI.

THE ERROR: TWO MORE ARGUMENTS.

IV. THE religious experience of the beginner can be explained without the assumption that depravity still remains in his heart.

It is said that “the position that there is no sin in a believer, no carnal mind,” is “contrary to the experience” of God’s children. “These continually feel a heart bent to backsliding, a natural tendency to evil, a proneness to depart from God, and cleave to the things of earth. They are daily sensible of sin remaining in their heart, pride, self-will, unbelief, and of sin cleaving to all they speak and do, even their best actions

and holiest duties. Yet, at the same time, they ‘know that they are of God;’ they cannot doubt of it one moment.” “So that they are equally assured that sin is in them, and ‘Christ is in them the hope of glory.’”—*Sermon on Sin in Believers.*

This is a strong delineation, but it is not necessary so to construe it as to make Mr. Wesley contradict himself. He did not intend in this passage to recant what he had been teaching all his life. He had already said, in this same sermon, that a justified man “has power over outward and inward sin, even from the moment he is justified.” By the term “sin,” in the passage first quoted, then, he cannot mean that there is guilt in a believer, nor any state of mind or heart which involves condemnation.

Consequently, instead of sin, properly so called, he means simply temptation, or that which originates temptation. Arguing in support of the residue theory, he cites these temptations as proof that the "infection of nature" may remain in the regenerate. The pride and self-will which he names are therefore practically temptations to pride and self-will, and temptations only; and the unbelief which remains in the heart of a true believer is weak faith only.

But he cites these temptations as a proof of a source of temptation within, a demonstration that the inner nature is still infected. The fact of temptation, even if it comes from within, does not prove the point at issue. The first temptation and the first sin in human history were recorded for our instruction in righteous-

ness; and they teach us lessons of profoundest wisdom. Let us examine them for a moment.

Eve was pure in her whole being; with no defect, no taint of depravity of any kind. By the craft of the adversary she was drawn into discourse, doubtless prolonged far beyond what is revealed in the brief narrative, in regard to the forbidden fruit, and the prohibition, compliance with which was appointed to be the test of their loyalty to God, the condition of their continuance in the divine favor. Her eyes and her thoughts were kept upon the tree until she *saw that it was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise.* Here were three enticements, each of which appealed to an element of perfect human nature, and tend-

ed to create a desire which in itself was wholly innocent. There was, first, the promised gratification of the love for pleasant food; secondly, the gratification of the inner taste, which delights in beautiful forms and colors; and, thirdly, the promised joy of increasing mental power and mental treasure.

The third element of the temptation was doubtless the strongest and most dangerous. It is a poor fancy to imagine that Adam and Eve, while adult in stature, were infants in intellect. It is not unreasonable to infer that they possessed a mental vigor which none of their posterity have equaled. A perfect mind acting through a perfect brain, a perfect physical organization, could hardly be otherwise than active, acute, powerful, quick to apprehend, and strong to

retain its acquisitions. A mind like this, studying a perfect creation, all new, all beautiful and good, reflecting the divine glory in man and beast, and bird and insect, in every leaf upon the trees of Eden as well as in every star that by night hung over it, must have found perpetual, exquisite enjoyment. Life itself must have been a succession of beautiful surprises, and every hour full of mingled wonder and adoration.

The enemy doubtless knew all this, and plied his arts skillfully. Eve stood looking at the beautiful tree, and listening to the cunning words of the tempter, assuring her of the unknown stores of pleasure within her reach, and the safety with which they might be seized. The longer she looked at the tree, and listened to the subtle tongue of the devil,

the more she felt the power of the temptation. The elements of her nature to which appeal was made were holy; the desires which sprung up were in themselves perfectly innocent. Yet, innocent as they were, these desires began to urge in the direction of sin. And still she looked and listened, while the honeyed speech went on, assuring her of mental enjoyment, new, untold, and yet safe; and the pressure increased, until at last she began to weigh the question of obedience or disobedience. And here is the place where sin began. To ponder that question is to begin to yield. Up to this point there was no guilt incurred; but now she considers whether to obey or disobey. And still she looked, and listened, and wished, until the desire overpowered all else, and she *took of the*

fruit and did eat. The deed was done, the compact was violated, and Satan triumphed over his victim.

All trial life implies temptation. All human needs and desires, though in themselves innocent, are sources of danger. Even a holy nature, as in the case of our first parents, may have in it elements which demand steady control, and without it work death. That a soul born of God should be still subject to temptation, and that it should not be free from sources of peril within, is not incomprehensible. Is it difficult to see how an innocent desire may impel in the direction of moral wrong? Illustrations might be multiplied to any extent.

A ship is wrecked. Two survivors of the crew reach a fragment of the shattered vessel, and day after day drift

helplessly upon the cruel sea. At last nothing remains of their scanty store of food and drink except two biscuits and a gill of water. These they reserve till they are at the point of death from thirst and starvation. The weary night succeeds the weary day, and morning comes again, but no land, no sail, greets their longing eyes. They bring out the last morsel, and resolve to eat and drink, and then lie down and wait, and, if they must, die. One eats and drinks his little portion in a moment, and feels as famished as ever. He begins to look at the biscuit in the hand of his comrade; he sees the scanty supply of water in the vessel, and the sight renders his hunger and thirst still more intense. The thought occurs, "I am stronger than he. I can take that away from him." Here is a

thought of sin, but not of necessity a sinful thought. Hunger and thirst are raging within him, unreasoning impulses which regard right and wrong no more than does the force of gravitation. They here press, too, in the direction of the wrong. Conscience, honor, friendship, humanity, oppose. *The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.* But the force which opposes conscience and honor is in itself innocent; and so long as conscience maintains perfect supremacy there is not a taint of sin.

Thus Christ himself was tempted after he had fasted forty days and was a hungered, Satan taking advantage of the hour of physical distress to make his assault. Thus Christ *was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.* Thus it be-

comes clear that where there is no taint of depravity there may be impulses, and even impulses originating within the nature, which urge in the direction of sin. I will even admit that these inner sources of danger may be increased by a previous life of sin. The penitent inebriate believes, and is pardoned and regenerated; but his brain, long accustomed to the intoxicant, may be so affected by the sudden withholding of it as to feel intense distress; and he is tortured by an almost intolerable longing for the old indulgence. This is the direct result of sin; yet it is not now sin, but disease; and in the pardoned man neither the disease nor the perils which it involves are proof that depravity still remains in the immortal soul.

Possibly we may gather some light

from this subject to aid in the interpretation of the passage in James: *Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed,* (James i, 14.) The term “lust” carries a bad face, but the original word (*ἐπιθυμία*) has no such aspect. Paul employs precisely the same term when he declares that he has *a desire to depart and be with Christ*. To be human is to be endowed with appetites and passions, innocent in themselves, but unreasoning, requiring to be guided by the intellect and the conscience, and controlled by the will. These appetites and passions may ally themselves to thought, but in themselves are void of thought, and know only to press onward. Man’s duty and safety demand that they be subjugated, taught to obey. He is like one who drives a team of blind

horses ; he must rein them up, and guide, and control them, or be dashed in pieces. When they master him, instead of his mastering them, ruin is not far off.

There are affections, also, in themselves not only innocent, but essential to a perfect humanity, which may at times impel in the direction of sin. A father whose children need food and medicine, which he has not the means of providing, finds a purse of money ; and as he looks at it the thought occurs, "O that this were mine ! what comfort and healing would it bring to my loved ones !" There is no sin in that thought. Another thought swiftly follows, "No one saw me pick it up. I can use the money, and no one will suspect me." Still there may be no sin. He may feel sad, too, when he reflects that he cannot honestly

conceal the purse and use the money to save the lives of his children ; but there may be no guilt in his sadness. If he wavers in his design to return it to the loser, he will feel guilty the moment he detects his hesitation ; but if he has the mastery in all his mental contest, not only is he guiltless, but there is nothing in the whole experience that proves the presence of depravity, either partial or total.

Then, again, we have an invisible enemy who delights to tempt even where he cannot overcome, and harass where he cannot destroy. Satan tempted David to be proud of his kingdom. He put it into the heart of Judas to betray his Master. He put it into the heart of Ananias and Sapphira to lie. These are instances where he succeeded. Who can

number the instances in which he assails? And who can tell, when evil suggestions, specious reasonings in favor of the wrong, spring up in his mind, from what source they come? A cold heart may chill devotion, and so may physical weariness. A lack of faith may fill the mind with anxiety and apprehension in regard to things temporal or spiritual; and yet a tendency to be apprehensive may be nothing but the first indication of approaching illness.

How then can one born of God infer from the nature of his temptations, or their numbers, or their strength, that the “infection of nature doth still remain?” And if, as Watson declares, the change which he has undergone involves “the utter destruction of the power of sin in the heart,” (Sermons, II, p. 413,) how can he

be sure that depravity exists there at all? And if, while he never expects in this world to get beyond the reach of temptation, he is steadily triumphing over them, why need he be anxious to ascertain their source? If the matches of the incendiary are extinguished so promptly that not a spark comes from them, nor even the smell of smoke, it matters little whether he is trying to set fire to the house from the inside or the outside.

V. The religious experience of the advanced Christian can be explained without assuming that, after his justification, depravity, either total or partial, remains in his heart until a special act of faith frees him from it.

The word of God recognizes distinctions of degree among genuine followers

of Christ. Some are described as weak, others as strong in the Lord. Some are very princes in Israel, and others, like the conies, are *a feeble folk*. Paul calls the Philippians his *brethren dearly beloved and longed for*, his *joy and crown*; but when he addressed the unfaithful Galatians he said, *I stand in doubt of you*. When he looked in the one direction he felt that he had not labored in vain. When he turned his eyes upon the others, he felt disappointment contending with hope. These things indicate a wide difference, not only in the outward conduct of these two companies of professed converts, but in the very elements of Christian character. The prophet Ezekiel, portraying the divine determination to punish sin, declares that when God brings pestilence upon the land, because

of the iniquities of the people, *though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness.* Here three men are named as eminent for their piety. No higher praise could be given men. Thus in later times Zacharias and Elizabeth *walked in all the commandments of the Lord blameless.*

In all ages, in all lands, where God is known—in all branches of the Church of Christ—there have been those who went *on to perfection, grew up into fullness of stature, and were filled with all the fullness of God.* Every-where they have shone as lights in the world. Joyfully we read the record of their holy lives, and glorify God in them. Their names are among the treasures of the Church; and from their bright example we learn

faith, hope, fidelity, courage for the right. Modern times, as well as the ages which are gone, have felt their presence and the power of their piety. Our own Church, as well as others, records the names of Christian men and women whose lives, like Jerusalem above, shine with the glory of God. It is easy to begin the list: Wesley, Fletcher, Bramwell, Asbury, Hedding—but where shall we end? Among the living, and among those who suspect it least of all, are men and women whose fidelity and spirituality irradiate wide spaces about them; and even the careless world *takes knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus.*

The Scriptures not only recognize eminent piety, but encourage all believers to attain it. It exhorts us to *go on unto perfection; to abound more and*

more in all the graces of the Spirit; to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; to grow up into Christ in all things; to give diligence to make our calling and election sure, for so an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom.

The same high privilege is held out to us in the beautiful figures of the Scripture. It is declared that *the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day;* that *the righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon;* that *he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, whose leaf shall not wither.* The kingdom of God is said to be *like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the*

seeds that be in the earth, but it groweth up and shooteth out great branches, so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

Nor is this growth limited to any one rate of progress. Wesley seems to have thought at one time that nothing is possible beyond a gradual advance, whose several steps are so small as to be imperceptible. Thus he speaks of sanctification as a “progressive work, carried on in the soul by slow degrees, from the time of our first turning to God.” (Sermon on the New Birth.) Thus he exhorts those who seek the fullness of blessing “not to fret” against God, because the work is not wholly done. “Instead of uselessly tormenting yourself because the time is not fully come, you will calmly and quietly wait for it, know-

ing that it will come, and will not tarry.”
(Sermon on Satan’s Devices.)

His later views on the subject are incomplete, possibly, but they recognize clearly the power of faith to hasten spiritual growth. The work of grace in the soul is subject to a thousand modifications, the causes of some of which we are able to trace; and of others totally unable. The temperament of the convert, the natural tenacity with which he carries out his purposes, his mental activity and ability, the clearness of his religious views and the facility with which he gathers religious knowledge, the thoroughness of conviction with which he begins to serve God, and the completeness of the surrender which he makes at the beginning, will all affect his subsequent progress.

Still, there is no limitation of times and seasons. Sometimes as much progress is made in an hour as was accomplished during previous years. A clear apprehension of the blessing, an ardent desire, a full surrender of all that we have and are, and hope for, a fixed purpose, a strong faith, urging the believer to the throne of God in humble, persistent, importunate prayer, cannot fail. And where all these become fixed habits of the soul and control the whole life, *bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*, there will be steady progress.

That a great work should be wrought in the soul of the experienced Christian in a brief space of time need not surprise us; nor need we seek to account for it as recovery from a previous deca-

dence. No such explanation is necessary. There are times in the life of the most faithful follower of Christ when new light seems to beam about him. He sees opening before his spiritual vision new possibilities of faith, and hope, and love. The divine law, the divine character, seem holier, and sin more hateful than ever before. Earth fades, heaven comes nearer. He looks at himself and finds how far below his privilege he has been living. He realizes that he is a spiritual dwarf, compared with what he ought to have been by this time. Then come, if may be, shame and sorrow that he has not done better. He still has peace with God. He does not feel that the wrath of God is upon him, because of the smallness of his spiritual stature, but he realizes that with all this

new light he cannot rest content with his present attainments ; that he would be condemned by his own conscience if he were to make no effort to advance to something higher, nobler, nearer God, and more like God. He burns with ardor of desire for God. He seeks in humble, importunate, believing prayer. And then comes the baptism of the Holy Ghost, rich, full, abundant, filling his soul with peace, and blessing, and salvation.

And thus the Christian rises from a lower to a higher plane of experience. His faith holds with a stronger grasp, his hope shines with brighter light, his love burns with a more steady flame. Every element of his character is clothed with new beauty and power. He is more faithful, more active, more zealous,

more humble, more watchful. He may still have temptations, but victory is more prompt and more complete. He is a larger Christian, worth more to the Church and the world than ever before, more *thoroughly furnished to all good works.* Nor need his growth cease at this point. All upward progress only reveals higher possibilities, other realms, like Bunyan's land of Beulah, "where the sun always shines, and the birds always sing."

Nor will the divine work wrought in the soul be of necessity defective because our theories fail to explain it. God's people would indeed fare ill if his dealings with them were no wiser than their prayers. What human father would be so cruel to his children as to limit himself by their inexperience? God will

not deal thus with the *sons* whom he is bringing unto glory. We know in whom we have believed. With the apostle we will exclaim, *Glory, throughout all ages, world without end, be to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us!* As the little child comes to the earthly parent, and even if it can make its wants known only by inarticulate cries and flowing tears, yet is understood, and parental love ministers to it far beyond its own scanty knowledge, so the child of God, coming into his presence with his burden of want, shall receive answers that go far beyond his poor prayers.

That God does so pass beyond us is matter of daily experience. We sometimes *ask amiss and receive not;* and

when we see more clearly, thank God that our unwise petition was not granted. We put our trust in him, and he careth for us, in advance of our hopes and fears, arming us for conflicts which we have not foreseen, and preparing for us blessings which we, in our ignorance, did not know that we needed. He hears the prayer of the sincere worshiper, where the want is real, but the thought is wholly astray. Some years ago, I knew a man who, when convinced of his sin and danger, prayed for a new heart, found pardon and peace, and lives to this day a faithful Christian. But I learned, some years after his conversion, that when he prayed for a new heart he thought, in his simplicity, that he must have a change of the literal heart which beat in his breast; that this identical or-

gan had been so long the home of Satan that it must be taken out of his body, and a new one substituted. But did he fail because of his strange idea? God's answer was wiser than the prayer, and went beyond the knowledge of the penitent. His penitence, his faith, gave him success.

He that comes to God with a burning desire for spiritual growth, for a stronger faith, a surer hope, a more fervent love to God and all that is God's; who yearns for a clearer insight into divine things, and a fuller experience of them, a closer alliance with the world unseen, a warmer fellowship with God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; a heart filled with all the fullness of God; a heart into which nothing that brings with it the least touch or taint of sin can

find entrance, will not hunger and thirst in vain. God will answer his prayer; and be to him exceeding abundantly above all he asks or thinks.



CHAPTER VII.

NORMAL CONDITION OF REGENERATE SOULS.

ATTENTION is called at this point to a distinction made more than once in the preceding pages, but stated so briefly that it may have been overlooked. I do not take the position that there can be no "sin" in a believer. Ships may escape wreck, and yet be damaged in the storm. Faith, *ready to die*, may not be dead. I do not doubt that a true believer may suffer a degree of spiritual loss, and yet remain a child of God. Wesley states that he wrote his sermon on "Sin in Believers" "in order to remove a mistake which some were

laboring to propagate, that there is no sin in any that are justified."—*Journal*, March 28, 1763. Had he written the sermon with the necessary accuracy of thought and language, to correct error in the exact form in which he thus stated it, his position on the general subject would have been clearer. The misfortune is, that instead of showing that it is unscriptural to say that "there is no sin in any that are justified," he has been understood to argue that until they have experienced a second special work of renewal, subsequent to their regeneration, there must be depravity in all that are justified.

Stating the question in the form of which Mr. Wesley puts it in his "*Journal*," the sermon is well reasoned and conclusive. When the Christian, sore pressed

by his spiritual enemies, begins to lose ground, who will venture to say that at the very first faltering step God will *take away his part out of the Book of Life?* The passages of Scripture which Mr. Wesley brings forward wholly fail to prove that until a second renewal is experienced, true believers remain in a state of partial depravity. Still, I think that he does prove that there may be "sin" in one who, although in fearful peril on account of his unfaithfulness, is not yet cast off. Sin is very dangerous. God is very merciful. Nevertheless I cannot admit that a soul in whom there is "sin" in either of the two more prominent senses, in which Wesley was accustomed to use the term, (1, depravity; 2, "voluntary transgression of known law,") is in a normal condition as a

believer, or that he would be where he is, if he had not lost something of that which was graciously bestowed upon him in the hour of his pardon and renewal.

But what do we mean by the phrase, "a normal condition?" The word *norma* signifies a square, or rule. To be normal, then, as I aim to use the term, is to be according to rule, plan, intention. A soul born of God, and in a normal condition as regenerate, is one in whom no part of the designed process of renewal has failed, no element or degree of it has been lost ; but all remains in accordance with the Divine idea and method of working. Such a one has truly repented, and believed, and been forgiven. He has *put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man which after God*

is created in righteousness and true holiness; and he retains what he received, and all that he received, in that hour, having forfeited nothing by a failing faith or a defective obedience. Thus he possesses all that “by rule” belongs to the regenerate state.

Mr. Wesley’s descriptions of that state are not feebly drawn. He says of the new birth: “I believe it to be an inward thing; a change from inward wickedness to inward goodness; an entire change of our inmost nature from the image of the devil, wherein we are born, to the image of God.”—*Journal*, Sept. 13, 1739.

But *to the law and to the testimony.* Let us hear what *saith the Lord.* The Scriptures mark only one great transition and transformation in the life of man, whereby he is *delivered from the*

power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. But in what terms do they describe it? They declare not only that the sins of the believing penitent are forgiven, not only that he is adopted and made a child of God, but that a mighty work has been divinely wrought in the very depths of his soul. Let the Scripture itself show the *sons of God* their birthright in all its fullness of blessing.

i. The believer is declared to be saved.

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness : but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

i Cor. i, 18.

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regenera-

tion, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.
Titus iii, 5.

2. The believer is declared to be *a new creature.*

Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

2 Cor. v, 17.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. Gal. vi, 15.

3. He is declared to be *a new man.*

Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him. Col. iii, 9, 10.

And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Eph. iv, 24.

4. The believer is said to be wholly cleansed.

If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. 1 John i, 7.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John i, 9.

5. The believer is said to be *free from sin.*

Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. Rom. vi, 18.

But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. Rom. vi, 22.

6. The believer is declared to be *sainted*.

And such were some of you ; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified. 1 Cor. vi, 11.

Jude the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called. Jude 1.

Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace? Heb. x, 29.

7. The believer is called *holy*.

Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering. Col. iii, 12.

I charge you by the Lord, that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.

1 Thess. v, 27.

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High-priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. Heb. iii, 1.

8. Believers are called *saints*.

Sing unto the Lord, all ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. Psa. xxx, 4.

And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.
Acts ix, 32.

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given. Eph. iii, 8.

These passages are not a tithe of those which might be cited. In all the

Scripture, God's faithful people are represented as holy. The places in which they are called *saints* number more than a hundred, the pen of Moses giving the first utterance of the lofty title, and the revelator the last. Who will lightly undertake to explain away this strong language? Who will dare to water this *sincere milk of the word?* *What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.*

These exalted epithets are indeed sometimes applied to bodies of believers, among whom were those who had lapsed from the grace once given, or had been false from the start; but this only adds weight to the argument. These titles and epithets, lofty as they are, so clearly belong to believers who are in a normal state, that they are not withheld even from Churches which are only in

part worthy to be thus designated. The nomenclature of the Scriptures is shaped on the principle, that the soul which is truly born of God is holy, and may through grace continue to be holy ; that every believer is, from the beginning, so endued with gracious power that, by steady faith and constant fidelity, he is able to master self, defeat Satan, and *keep himself unspotted from the world* ; and that those who fail to do this, fall below both their privilege and their duty. The express language of the Scripture, penned, *not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth*, proclaims that every one who is born of God becomes, that very hour, *a new creature, a new man, holy, free from sin, cleansed, sanctified, saved*.

And it is admitted, indeed, by all

classes of Methodist writers, that, in some cases, the inner cleansing is complete in regeneration. Wesley, in his "Plain Account," describes the gentleness, love, meekness, and other graces which are seen in their maturity in the perfect Christian, and then supposes an objector to reply—"But some who are newly justified" come up to this standard: "What will you say to these?" He answers—"If they really do, I will say they are sanctified, saved from sin, in that moment, and that they never need lose what God has given, or feel sin any more. But certainly this is an exempt case."

Mr. Fletcher, in his treatise on "Christian Perfection," quotes this passage, adding: "From the ground of my soul, I subscribe to the answer."

Mr. Wesley also remarks: "Sometimes he cuts short his work. He does the work of many years in a few weeks; perhaps in a week, a day, an hour. He justifies, or sanctifies, both those who have done or suffered nothing, and who have not had time for a gradual growth either in light or grace."—*Plain Account*.

In his Journal of 1762, Wesley records his visit to Liverpool, and his examination of fifty-one persons who claimed to be "fully saved from sin."

In one of these, the change was wrought three weeks after she was justified; in three, one week; in one, a girl fourteen, two days. Two of them professed the blessing the next day after they found peace with God. Three years after, he thus narrates the case of Grace Paddy, of Redruth: "Such an

instance I never knew before; such an instance I never read; a person convinced of sin, converted to God, and renewed in love, within twelve hours! Yet it is by no means incredible, seeing one day is with God as a thousand years."

—*Journal*, Sept. 8, 1765.

Wesley accepted these cases as genuine, and was therefore wholly consistent when he admitted the possibility of a soul's finding pardon, and the cleansing from all unrighteousness the self-same hour.

The same admission is made by writers of our own day.

"In a few instances, we believe, the blessing has been received so soon after regeneration as to make the periods seem entirely identical." "Some really do pass from a state of guilt into the full

enjoyment of perfect purity."—*Central Idea of Christianity*, pp. 111, 198

One of our most thoughtful and candid writers on this subject thus remarks :

"I do not deny that regeneration and entire sanctification are sometimes instantaneous. . . . There are some (very few) Christians who declare that they have never been aware of the conflict between the carnal and the spiritual nature; that so far as they have been able to analyze their own consciousness, they have, from the moment of conversion, been entirely victorious over their natural besetting sins. . . . I see no proof that it is impossible. . . . It surely is within the power of God to sanctify entirely when he regenerates. . . . Many, in seeking religion, have conceived that its attainment would be perfect holiness. . . . We see

nothing in Scripture to forbid such expectation. It enjoins this state from the first, declares the provisions for it complete, and the promises fully and clearly cover it."—*Rev. W. I. Gill, in Home Journal, 1873.*

Wesley is evidently slow to admit, in his "Plain Account," that the renewal experienced in the hour of pardon is complete, except in "exempt cases." He had peculiar reasons for his hesitation. The ninth article of the Church of England, as we have seen, declares that the infection of nature remains in the regenerate; and Wesley claimed to be a loyal son of the Church. But there was still another ecclesiastical lion in the way. It is useless to shut our eyes to the fact that Wesley held the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Let his own words testify:

"How is every one that is born of the Spirit—that is, born again—born of God? What is meant by the being born again, the being born of God, or being born of the Spirit? What is implied in the being a son or a child of God, or having the Spirit of adoption? That these privileges, by the free mercy of God, are ordinarily annexed to baptism (which is thence termed by our Lord, in the preceding verse, 'the being born of water and of the Spirit') we know."—*Sermons*, vol. i, p. 154.

In the same sermon, addressing those living in sin, he alludes to their baptism, and asks, "Who denies that ye were then made children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven?"

Mr. Wesley held that he had himself been regenerated in baptism. "I believe,

till I was about ten years old, I had not sinned away that ‘washing of the Holy Ghost’ which was given me in baptism.”

—*Journal*, May 24, 1738.

These sentiments Wesley published to the world, and continued to publish them, in successive editions of his works, as long as he lived. But in theology, as in other fields of knowledge, every conclusion reached becomes the starting-point of new inquiries, and leads onward to new conclusions. The very moment it is admitted that souls are regenerated in baptism, the question arises, What does such regeneration amount to? What change does it work in the inner nature? This question must have an answer. The Church which teaches that infants baptized by lawful hands are in that moment born of God, will find it very

convenient to make formal declaration of the additional fact, that the “infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated.”

It would seem from what we know of Wesley, that all his evangelical instincts must have risen in opposition to the doctrine of baptismal regeneration; but it is also evident, that when this doctrine was once accepted, these same instincts would prompt him to welcome, with a feeling of relief, the other doctrine that such regeneration is very imperfect. The visible facts of the case demanded this conclusion. When Wesley found himself assailed with stones and mud, and dragged through the streets by a drunken mob of these baptismal regenerates, profane, brutal, murderous, headed perhaps by a wicked cleric, who claimed

that his own hands had inducted them into the kingdom of heaven, he might well suspect that at least some degree of depravity survives the baptismal process.

May not these things have had an influence to lead him to the conclusion that even after the regeneration which follows repentance and faith, something more is needed to complete renewal?

In fact, Mr. Wesley's varying utterances on the subject seem to indicate that his mind vibrated like a pendulum between certain views of the truth and certain dogmas of the Church of England. In 1739, he defines regeneration to be "an entire change of our inmost nature." In 1763, attacking the "high perfectionists," he becomes so earnest in proving that there may be sin in be-

lievers, that he forgets to point out any mode of deliverance from it. In 1785, his final utterance on the subject, he says not a word about the incompleteness of regeneration, but defines Christian perfection to be the maturity of the Christian graces, and freedom from "voluntary transgression of known law."

Wesley's emphatic repudiation of the wild notions of the London Moravians is nowise inconsistent with his admission, that a soul may be wholly renewed in the hour of pardon. Zinzendorf indeed taught that the moment the penitent believes, he gains the highest point of perfection attainable in this life; but it must be remembered that the holiness which he described is imputed, not personal. In their interview of September, 1741, he told Wesley that while they

were, in Christ, as holy as they ever would be, "true Christians are miserable sinners;" "the whole of Christian perfection is imputed, not inherent; Christ is our only perfection. Whoever follows after inherent perfection denies Christ." I acknowledge no inherent perfection in this life. This is the error of errors. I pursue it through the world with fire and sword."—*Wesley's Journal*, September, 1741.

Spangenberg told Mr. Wesley that "inward corruption remains in the soul as long as the soul remains in the body." Wesley wrote to his brother, describing his interview with the "Apostle of the Moravians;" and Charles Wesley notes in his "Journal" the impressions derived from that letter, by saying that he was astonished to find that Count Zinzendorf

"utterly denies all Christian holiness." In 1745 the Wesleys published a pamphlet, in which they condemned several dogmas of the Moravians, and pronounced as "senseless jargon" Zinzendorf's notion that "a believer is not holy *in himself*, but in Christ only;" and Zinzendorf replied, by an advertisement in the public papers, that the Moravians had ceased to have any connection with the Wesleys. The Moravian idea of holiness was utterly Antinomian and unscriptural.

But if it be admitted that some are wholly renewed in the hour of pardon, while others are not, what causes this important difference? This is a fair question. Nay, if the doctrine named be true, it is a question, not to ask which would be criminal. The matter is so momentous that neglect or indifference

cannot be guiltless. Complete renewal is in the highest degree desirable. We are exhorted to *covet earnestly the best gifts.* Bishop Peck remarks that “to do less for man than to make him holy, would be in effect to do nothing for him.” Yet he affirms that “regeneration is not of itself a preparation for heaven.” “In our honest judgment, there are few cases of only partial sanctification in which every single day does not make bitter work for repentance.”—*Central Idea*, pp. 19, 59, 122. If it be true that when two souls, penitent, broken-hearted on account of sin, fly to the Saviour, imploring his aid and looking to him alone for help, the one may receive not only pardon and peace, but a complete renewal, which *cleanses from all unrighteousness*, while the other is the subject of an imperfect

work, which is no preparation for heaven, and which leaves him still so depraved, and so at the mercy of temptation, that every day makes bitter work for repentance, surely it ought to be known. If this theory of two kinds of conversion is true, it is one of the most weighty truths of revelation, and a fearful burden of guilt rests upon the ministry if they fail to explain to the penitent on what terms he may secure the better sort, and escape the other, which is so deplorably inadequate to his necessities.

Is the theory true? I cannot find it in the word of God; and “whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith.” The language of Scripture is, “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and*

just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." What right has any man to cut off the last six words of this divine declaration, or interpolate new conditions before them?

But the position may be taken, that although the notion of two styles of conversion is not read in the express language of Scripture, it may be proved thereby; that when we pray, it is done unto us *according to our faith*; that the penitent does not pray for a complete renewal, nor even feel that he needs it, and therefore does not attain it.

This reasoning is not satisfactory. If the mind of the penitent is fixed at all upon the work to be wrought in him, he prays for a complete work. He surely will not ask to be only half cleansed, only half renewed. Consequently, if his

views of his need are to determine the results, there will be complete renewal or none.

Again, if the penitent's idea of the work to be wrought in him controls the result, might not a little attention on the part of his religious instructors put him in the way of securing the better kind of conversion? If a single sentence, whispered in his ear as he prays, will tell him how to obtain a clean heart, is it not cruel to withhold it? According to this doctrine, for want of a few words of advice he may halt at a half-way conversion, which only prepares him for bitter repentance every day, and leaves him without a preparation for heaven. If this doctrine is true, the quickest way to secure a holy Church is for the ministry to do their work better.

Here again I wholly agree with my friend, the Rev. Mr. Gill:—

“ Happy are they who thus, from the first, make God their sanctification as well as their redemption. It should be our aim to lead souls to Christ in just this way, so that the Christian life shall be known to them only as a life of constant spiritual victory and holy peace. It surely may be so.”—*Home Journal*, 1873.

It may be urged that the actual experience of God’s people shows that, in conversion, some are wholly freed from depravity, and others are not. To this the fair reply is, that in regard to so important a doctrine, human experience is not sufficient proof where the Scriptures are silent.

Again, if mere human consciousness is

to determine the question, no conclusion can be reached, except that a genuine conversion *cleanses from all unrighteousness*. Wesley thus describes the experience of those who find the Saviour:—

“When the love of God is first shed abroad in our hearts, and his kingdom set up therein, it is natural to suppose that we are no longer sinners; that all our sins are not only covered, but destroyed. As we do not feel any evil in our hearts, we readily imagine none is there.”—*Sermons*, vol. ii, p. 117.

“In this peace” pardoned souls “remain for days, or weeks, or months, and commonly suppose they shall know war no more.”—*Plain Account*.

Mr. Wesley, Bishop Peck, and others, as we have seen, admit the possibility of complete renewal in conversion. But

how are these “exempt cases,” as Wesley styles them, to be distinguished from the multitude? So far as I can see, the chief proof of the complete work is the fact that the favored one “feels no evil in his heart,” and abides in the peace and joy which marked the hour when he found the pardon of his sins. But how long must peace continue in order to show that depravity is gone? If weeks and months of peace prove no deliverance, will years prove it? And if years prove it, do months, or even weeks, prove nothing? What length of time must elapse before the believer is justified in concluding that, not the common sort, but the higher style of conversion has fallen to his lot? This is a fair question, and yet it is clear that it can have no definite and satisfactory answer.

And then comes another question, equally hard. Suppose that, after a week, a month, or a year of peace, the believer feels temptation, how is he to determine whether it comes from corruption in his own heart, or from some other source? Wesley answers: "In some cases it is impossible to distinguish without the *direct witness* of the Spirit." But where is the Scripture proof that the believer may expect thus to be divinely instructed at all times, either in regard to his exact religious state, or the sources of the temptations which assail him?

Light is needed on still another point. If, after a week, a month, or a year of continued peace, the believer really discovers, no matter in what way, that there is a degree of depravity in his heart, how

is he to determine with certainty whether it is remaining depravity, or depravity returning? All agree that men lapse, sometimes suddenly, sometimes by slow degrees, from the highest religious states. If, therefore, depravity be detected in the heart after a period of time during which it was not felt, the consciousness can only bear witness of its presence, and leave the question whether it has revived or returned to be settled on other principles. If consciousness is to decide the question, its verdict is clearly to the effect that, during the period when depravity was not felt, it did not exist in the heart.

After examining the subject in its various bearings, the conclusions in which my mind clearly and confidently rests, are these:—

1. That the theory of a renewal com-

pleted in two separate and distinct works, one of which, wrought in the hour of pardon, takes away a certain part of inborn depravity, and the other, also instantaneous, at some subsequent period—generally in answer to specific prayer and as the result of an act of specific faith—takes away the rest, has no foundation in the Scripture, and, moreover, is burdened with fatal difficulties.

2. That Mr. Wesley, in 1739, set forth the true idea of regeneration in the words already quoted :—

“ I believe it to be an inward thing: a change from inward wickedness to inward goodness, an entire change of our inmost nature from the image of the devil (wherein we are born) to the image of God.”

It must be admitted that this conclu-

sion will not be welcome among careless and worldly members of the Church. It lays upon all who bear the name of Christ more weighty obligations, and makes higher demands, than some of us have been accustomed to recognize. They who believe that in their conversion God did a thorough work, that he then *cleansed them from all unrighteousness*, and equipped them for continuous victory over sin, and summoned them to live a holy life from that hour, cannot, by their unfaithfulness make work every day for bitter repentance, and yet claim that they are all that God made them in the day of their pardon and renewal. Thus it strips off the *untempered mortar* which false theories supply, and with which unfaithful professors of religion are only too willing to be *daubed*.

But it may be objected that if Mr. Wesley's definition of 1739, taken in the obvious import of the terms employed, is the true one, we are at once driven to the conclusion that very few souls maintain the gracious state in which regeneration places them at the beginning ; and that the whole Christian Church, as a body, is in a very serious degree *fallen from grace*.

Assuming the correctness of this conclusion, what then ? Shall we attempt to pare down the doctrines of God's word to make them tally with our poor experience ? Ought we not rather to humble ourselves before God, confessing our faults, asking forgiveness, and renewing our vows, and by a new consecration, new faith and fidelity, labor to bring up our experience to the divine standard ?

This is a sufficient answer to the objection. Still, it is not the only one that may with propriety be given. It does not become me to sit in the judgment-seat, and attempt to decide in regard to the exact religious condition of those who bear the Christian name; but if, as the objection implies, practical religious life generally is of too low a grade, it is evident that we are compelled to choose between two methods of setting forth the fact. The one is to confess that God graciously *cleansed us from all unrighteousness* in the hour of our conversion; that he then *sanctified* and *saved* us, but that we have lost ground in religion since that glad moment. The other is to declare that, faulty as we are, we remain exactly what God made us in that moment; and that the only mistake

into which we have fallen is, that we have been content to remain where his own hand placed us. Which plea sounds best from human lips? Which best commends itself to enlightened reason? There is but one answer. The first method of explaining the alleged fact honors God, and shows man the cause of his unsatisfactory religious life; the second tends to quiet uneasy consciences, and lessen the sense of responsibility for all manner of defects.

Moreover, of those who profess to have obtained a complete renewal by virtue of a second special work, very few claim to have held their ground, without lapse or intermission, from the commencement of their higher experience. I have heard that on a certain occasion, when some three hundred con-

fessors of the higher life were present, inquiry was instituted on this point, and only nine were found who had retained the gracious state without interruption. In fact, Wesley remarks that "it is rather uncommon to find any believers who are not conscious of having been backsliders from God, in a higher or lower degree, and perhaps more than once, before they were established in faith."—*Sermons*, vol. ii, p. 247.

Even if, therefore, by far the greater number of those *born of God* fail to retain continuously the blessedness and peace of that hour, they do no worse than those who profess to have undergone a second work of renewal which completed what the first left unfinished.



CHAPTER VIII.

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

BUT if the soul in the hour of pardon and renewal is made a new creature, and there has been, as Mr. Wesley defines it, "an entire change of the inmost nature from the image of the devil to the image of God," wherein does it fall below the highest attainable point of the Christian life? *Much every way.* The state attained when saving faith is first exercised is exalted. It places man in the favor of God, adopts him into the family of God, and makes him an heir of heaven; nevertheless, there is a state still more exalted, which the Scriptures

call perfection. Holiness is an essential mark of all who believe in Christ and are saved ; but holiness, in the Scripture sense of the term, is more than freedom from depravity. Mr. Wesley remarks that to be saved “from sin, from all sin,” is “only the least, the lowest branch,” of Christian perfection. (*Sermons*, vol. ii, p. 170.) Mr. Fletcher was scripturally right and wise when he said : “It seems to me but a small thing to be saved from all sin ; I want to be filled with all the fullness of God.” Under the cunning chisel of the sculptor, the insensate marble takes on the form of an angel, and is as free from sin as an angel ; but there is no faith, no hope, no love, no element of the divine character, in its stony bosom. Scripture holiness includes the positive graces of the new life, and these are sus-

ceptible of unlimited growth. There is a state as much in advance of that of the recent convert, as *the full corn in the ear* is in advance of the springing *blade*. Hence, true believers, already in a state of salvation, are exhorted to *grow in grace, grow up into Christ, and go on unto perfection.*

The most thorough and fearless examination which I have been able to give the subject leads me to the conclusion that, in regard to Christian perfection as an attainment, the teachings of Mr. Wesley are wholly correct and scriptural. From some of the incidental remarks which he makes in discussing it, and from some of the opinions which he incidentally offers, I am compelled to dissent. One of these is his judgment in regard to the period in the history of

man, when this thoroughness of religious character became possible.

Mr. Wesley asserts that what he terms perfection is a special grace, reserved for those only who live under the Gospel; and that no Old Testament saint attained to it. “Even from the day that sin entered into the world, there was not a just man upon earth that did good and sinned not, until the Son of God was manifested to take away our sins.” “This great salvation from sin was not given till Jesus was glorified.”—*Sermons*, vol. ii, p. 361. Yet during the forty centuries which passed away before Christ ascended to the Father, there were beautiful examples of mature piety, which shone as lights in the world. During those ages, Abel obtained witness that he was righteous, and Enoch walked with

God, and Abraham was called the friend of God, and Job suffered and sinned not, and David witnessed for God, and Zacharias and Elizabeth walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, and Nathaniel was an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, magnified the Lord, and rejoiced in God her Saviour. These saints of olden time indeed grew into their lofty stature without the fullness of knowledge which we possess to whom the Gospel is preached ; but in regard to victory over sin, and freedom from its defilement, I see no good reason for assigning them an inferior place.

Nor do I see good grounds for Wesley's recording in the Minutes of the Conferences of 1745 the assertion, that

“Paul himself was not sanctified when he wrote his former epistles.” At what period of his life, then, was the second work wrought? Where does he tell the story of it? A clear and full narration of such an experience, penned by an inspired apostle, would have settled many perplexing questions. Paul’s omission of this experience, provided he ever had it, seems very unfortunate. But these opinions of Mr. Wesley are incidental, not affecting the main question.

Considered as a state of the soul, Christian perfection has in it three elements:—

1. Freedom from voluntary transgression of known law, or from what Wesley defines as “sin, properly so called.”

2. Freedom from the moral depravity

which inheres in the soul previous to its renewal.

3. The development and maturity of the Christian graces.

But each of these points needs to be examined, that the full force of the statement may be felt.

What is implied in being free from “voluntary transgression of known law?”

No mere man since the fall can render perfect obedience. The law is inexorable. It demands the exact right in all things, every deed which our hands perform, every word which our lips utter, every thought which the mind entertains, every emotion which the heart cherishes. To vary a hair’s breadth from the exact right violates the law. A perfect legal obedience requires a perfect knowledge of the Divine law, and of its application to the

most minute and diversified affairs of practical life. No man possesses this perfect knowledge. *Love* may be graciously accepted under the Gospel as *the fulfilling of the law*; but love itself, however fervent and devoted, is often perplexed in regard to the exact right. Hence error and mistake are inevitable.

Again, all our powers are impaired by the fall. The intellect is less accurate, and the emotional nature duller, and our best obedience is thereby marred. Because we have this treasure in earthen vessels, our highest, holiest emotions are less exalted, less absorbing, less continuous, than we would fain have them. The instrument is, at the best, only in imperfect tune, and our loftiest songs are, therefore, fainter and less harmonious.

Nevertheless, it is the Christian's privi-

lege to live free from such transgression as forfeits God's favor, and brings darkness upon the soul. We may be kept from all sin, known at the time to be sin. Even where the intellect is in doubt, the heart may be conscious that its whole desire and aim are to do the right. Trusting in Christ by a living faith which *worketh by love*, we may have victory all along the way, and *walk in the light as He is in the light*.

Still, this obedience is susceptible of constant improvement. The practical life of a growing Christian daily approaches the absolute right. The beginner often discovers that something was amiss in his past conduct. He did not see it at the time, but he sees it now. If he is wise, he confesses it before God, and sets a double guard at points of danger. As

he advances in the new life, his moral vision becomes clearer, the moral sense more acute and forceful, and as he has, *by reason of use, his senses exercised to discern both good and evil,* the decisions of his conscience are more intelligent and correct. As the commandment grows exceeding broad before his eyes, he gathers gracious strength to obey. As he learns more and more of God, he loves and adores more profoundly, earth recedes, heaven draws him with stronger attraction, every thought is brought into captivity to Christ, the whole soul, body, and spirit become disciplined to obedience, and at last it may be said of him that he is *no longer a child, but of full age, and a perfect man.* Thus, while the convert may from the beginning be graciously kept from the sin which forfeits

peace, he is but a beginner; and it is his privilege to yield a better service, and daily approach the standard of perfect rectitude. He will indeed never reach it in this life, because he will never attain perfect knowledge; but every step of his advance is in the direction of truth, peace, safety, absolute holiness, and God.

What is it to be freed from the moral depravity which inheres in the soul previous to its renewal?

I cannot accept the theory that the damage inflicted upon man by the fall is partial, that it reaches directly the material nature only, and that the soul, itself untouched, suffers only the loss of its supremacy over the appetites and passions of the bodily organism. The whole man is fallen; his physical nature is physically depraved; his moral nature is

morally depraved. Devils are never described in the Scripture as having material bodies; yet they are always represented as the implacable enemies of all righteousness, cruel, malignant, unwearyed in evil doing. Depravity is as positive and real a thing as holiness. Before the fall, every instinct and affection of the human soul turned toward God as naturally as the needle to the pole, or the leaves to the light. Since the fall, and apart from divine grace, the soul turns away from God with a force as positive and determined.

This evil force and tendency constitute the moral depravity which Wesley usually calls "sin." Holding the doctrine, that when the soul attains "full salvation" this depravity of the immortal spirit is cleansed away, he sometimes

speaks of it as if the work is wholly complete in conversion ; at other times as if a second work of renewal is needed to finish what conversion begins, but always representing it as something to be removed. This representation is correct. There is in the unrenewed soul a real and positive depravity which needs to be cleansed away *by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.* This washing and renewal I believe to be one work, done in the hour when *with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.* Those who argue in favor of a partial renewing, tell us in the same breath how deplorably inadequate it is to the soul's needs. Mr. Wesley taught that the second work can be secured in a few hours after the first, without any intervening growth in grace or knowl-

edge ; and that in some exempt cases the first and second works are blended and made one. It seems to me more accordant with Scripture to hold that as a rule, and not as the exception, God fully meets the wants of the penitent at once.

But if the soul is completely renewed, why not infer that the whole man, the body as well as the soul, is restored to primeval perfection ? Because both fact and reason deny it. The world around us is still marred. We know that we ourselves are still subject to pain, sorrow, and death. We see this, and we see the reason of it. If the pardon of sin also secured exemption from toil, disease, and grief, the ten thousand ills to which flesh is heir, then would powerful worldly motives urge us to a religious life. What would such obedience be worth ? Christ

would have occasion again and again to say to those who followed him, as he did to certain of old, *Ye seek me, because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled.*

But all judicious writers agree that after grace has wrought its work in the soul, and man has become a new creature, there remain sources of danger within. This fact has already been named, but further examination is needful.

It is admitted that the highest attainments in religion do not lift men out of the reach of temptation, nor render a fall into actual sin impossible. Until this trial life ends, therefore, there must remain in the Christian something upon which temptation may lay hold—something not evil in itself, but capable of furnishing the soil out of which evil may grow. What, then, is this something?

In describing the state of a soul not fully cleansed, Wesley designates, as the remains of the evil nature, "any sinful temper, passion, or affection, such as pride, self-will, love of the world, in any kind or degree ; such as lust, anger, peevishness—any disposition contrary to the mind which was in Christ."—*Sermons*, vol. i, p. 109.

This statement seems to me too brief to be clear. Let us examine the subject a little more at length. Man, himself in part material, is assigned his trial-life in a material world. Here lie his duties and his dangers. To fit him for his place, he is endowed with various appetites, passions, and affections, all good and useful in their proper sphere, but liable to pass beyond it. He is intended to be a social being, and so is endowed with the

affections which unite men in families, communities, nations. His daily wants, his comfort, his progress in art, science, and even religion, are connected with what we term property, and therefore he is endowed with an instinctive desire to accumulate and possess. The brute creation has rebelled against him, and he therefore needs courage to defend himself. Among his fellow-men there are wrongs to be attacked, and reforms to be achieved, and he needs somewhat of the militant spirit, that he may fight strongly for the right. He is accountable to God for his conduct, and therefore is endowed with will, the power of self-direction, that he may choose his own course, and be justly held responsible for his choice. These appetites, passions, and attributes of

character are essential to man as a dweller in this present world; and without them he would be helpless, unfitted for his place, and, in fact, would cease to be a man.

Within their proper sphere, these attributes of his nature are beautiful and beneficent; and by the right exercise of them, man grows in goodness. The love which he bears his wife and children trains him for all kindness and benevolence. He contemplates the comfort and plenty which his honest toils have won for those whom he loves, and the satisfaction which he feels strengthens him in his habit of industry and forethought. His justice, truth, and honor win the commendation of the wise and good; and their praises cheer him in times of disappointment and disaster. He is

called to follow his own reason and conscience, against the clamors of the multitude, and finds a joy in the sense of his moral freedom. A panther springs upon his child, and he faces the savage beast with eyes that flame with equal fury, but there is no sin in his mighty passion. He attacks some gigantic wrong with a desperate courage like that with which soldiers storm a battery ; but God looks down with a smile upon his heroism, and numbers him among those who, *losing their lives, find them.*

These attributes are elements, not of human depravity, but of human nature in its best estate. Conversion does not remove them. The highest attainments in true piety do not remove them. Nay, they may continue to exist in something of the disproportion which manifested

itself before renewal. The born miser, when renewed by grace, may be honest and just in his dealings, and give his money lavishly for good purposes; but he will never be as careless of property as is the born prodigal. The most thorough renewal will never reduce to exactly the same level the naturally quiet and the naturally passionate man, nor make the diffident man and the conceited one exactly alike. Each may, through grace, maintain perfect supremacy over his besetment; and yet the besetment survives the deepest work of grace. When men, once truly changed, fall from their steadfastness into overt sin, they generally fall into the same pit whence they were rescued in conversion; thus showing not only that the elements of true human nature survive the renewing

process, but also that the passions which ruled them in the days of their sin still remain in sufficient degree, after conversion, to expose assailable points to the enemy.

But all this does not prove that moral depravity exists in the soul. The state of the unrenewed heart is indeed such as to give the tempter a fearful advantage ; but the removal of the innate depravity does not take away the possibility of our being tempted, even from within. When Esau sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage, the hunger which prompted the deed was natural and innocent. Abraham could not contemplate without a pang the slaying of his son ; but the natural affection which resisted the divine command was not depravity. There may be anger in which is no sin, for Jesus once *looked*

round about him upon the caviling, hypocritic Pharisees *with anger*. But when any natural affection, however innocent, good, and beautiful in itself, becomes a tyrant and tramples conscience in the dust, when any natural appetite or passion breaks over the bounds which God has set, then sin enters and guilt follows.

The mature Christian feels these impulses as really as does the unrenewed man, though not in the same degree, because the depravity which once rendered temptation well-nigh irresistible, is gone. He has learned to detect evil from afar, and grace is present in every time of need, and he overcomes and controls his appetites, passions, and affections, and compels them to conform to the divine law. He is not their slave, but their master. And so long as con-

science, reason, and the love of God rule, there is not a touch or taint of sin in his heart, and not a shadow of condemnation rests upon him.

We conclude, therefore, that there are inner sources of temptation, which remain even after what the Scriptures call perfection is attained ; nevertheless, they are not moral depravity, nor the remains of depravity, but are simply elements of our probationary life. It is well that this point should be clearly understood, lest we may on the one hand be needlessly distressed by calling that sin which is not sin, or on the other seek, and even claim to possess, an experience which must of necessity be unreal and delusive.

The third element of Christian perfection, the ripeness of the Christian

graces, needs little discussion, inasmuch as there is little room for difference of opinion. The very outset of the new life is indeed represented in glowing terms in the Scriptures ; but there is a religious maturity which is far in advance of the glorious beginning. The passages which describe it are among the most beautiful and sublime to be found in the oracles of God. *For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man ; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth*

and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” Eph. iii, 14-19.

Believers are encouraged to seek this completeness by the assurance that all needful instrumentalities are provided *for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we are all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.* Eph. iv, 12, 13.

We are further encouraged to seek this spiritual growth and ripeness by the assurance that He who *worketh in us, is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.*

Religious maturity includes the “whole

cluster and constellation" of the Christian graces—a faith which maintains a steady trust in God, a fidelity which never wavers when duty calls, a love which glows without intermission toward God and men, a patience which endures all suffering and all provocation, a hope which never grows dark; in our degree, every virtue which adorned the character and beautified the life of *the man Christ Jesus*. No point can be reached where growth must end. Every element of the Christian character is susceptible of indefinite increase. Faith may hold on God and eternal things with a grasp which every day becomes more steady and strong. Love may daily become warmer, and hope shine with brighter light. Zeal may grow wiser, humility deeper, patience and meekness more

enduring. The consciousness of God's loving presence may become clearer, sweeter, and more continuous. As the knowledge of God increases, devotion sinks deeper, and rises higher; the sense of infinite obligation is clearer, and obedience more joyous, exact, and complete, until it *brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*, and the man of God is perfect, and he can say with Paul, *I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*. He is still human, endowed with all the innocent appetites, passions, and affections which belong to his nature; he is still subject to pain, sorrow, and temptation, and needs to watch and pray and seek divine help every moment; but grace is triumphant, and he is *mighty through God to defeat his foes, and keep himself unspotted from the world*.

This gracious state is surely far in advance of the newness and inexperience of the beginner. Nor is it any the less real, because it lacks a visible line of demarcation, by which true believers may be separated into two distinct classes, those of the higher, and those of the lower religious life, and every man be assigned his place on this side or that; nor because it allows no man to claim a place on the better side of the line, on the strength of some hidden experience of which he must of necessity be the sole judge, and where there is little visible distinction in practical Christian living.



CHAPTER IX.

THE CONCLUSION: AN APPEAL.

CHRISTIAN reader, how do these things look? Where are you in reference to them? Are you a beginner, having just entered the highway of holiness? Bless God for your conversion. You are washed, regenerated, saved. *Stand fast in the liberty where-with Christ hath made you free.* Believing, trusting, obeying, employing for the hour the grace which the hour brings with it, you are the Lord's. Powerless in yourself, you are clothed with Divine might to overcome the world and sin. Your state is most exalted. You are called to a place among God's people,

who are *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

You see your calling. Do not for one moment undervalue your present attainments. You are now a child of God. He has graciously adopted you into his family, and made you not only a child but an heir. A crown and a kingdom awaits you. Remember this ever, and be not unworthy of your royal lineage. You are not so far away in point of time from your former life of sin that you forget it. It seems so near that you wonder at the change, and are almost ready to question the reality of the transition. But the change is real. Do not doubt it, wonderful as it seems. Still, do not

mistake. You will not reach the goal at a bound, nor win the battle with a single blow. *So run, that you may obtain; so fight, not as one that beateth the air.*

Remember, from the first hour of your acceptance you are called to be holy. *He that committeth sin is of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.* Continuous victory is your birthright. You have *come out of darkness into marvelous light;* and you may so live that the shadows return not. But be not ignorant of the devices of your enemy. You will be tempted; so craftily, too, that you will be at a loss to tell whence the poisoned arrow comes. Satan and his angels will hover about your path, ready to assault at every opportunity. Impulses from within, innocent in themselves it may be, will require con-

stant constraint, or become sources of evil. Only by wariness and self-mastery, by steadiness of purpose and fidelity in all things, can you be safe. *Grow, then, in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Go on unto perfection.* Aspire to the highest attainable point, the best gifts of God's grace. Aim to be a thorough Christian, fully developed, well rounded on every side.

Many sincere followers of Christ are one sided, strong in some elements of the Christian character, and not so strong in others. One has faith, but lacks hope. Another has faith and hope, but does not abound in charity. A third has faith, hope, and charity, but is deficient in humility, zeal, or patience. Thus good men, on their way to *the city which hath foundations*, exhibit the Christian

graces in various degrees of development, and are unequally equipped for the varied duties of the new life. They are strong here, weak there, rounded out on this side, sunken on that. Aspire, then, to completeness, thoroughness, perfection. Let us examine, briefly, four elements of a strong and beautiful Christian character.

i. Thorough conviction of the truth of God's word, and the reality of the things revealed therein.

The possibility of doubt belongs, almost of necessity, to a probationary state. God could, if he deemed it best, so reveal himself that unbelief would be impossible. He might write his laws upon the azure skies, and utter them in the voice of the storm. He might cause the earth to open beneath the feet of

every transgressor, as it did in the case of Korah. He could smite every sinner, at the very moment of transgression, with so stern and so visible a hand that obedience would have little moral value. Not to thrust one's hand into a blazing furnace is not proof of uncommon sagacity. To get out of the way of a railway train is not virtue. For children to obey when the father stands holding the rod over them, is no proof that they possess the spirit of true obedience. Take them when they are away from home, when they fancy that the father will never hear of their conduct, and then, if they obey, *the root of the matter is found in them.*

That moral liberty may not be destroyed, God withdraws himself from human vision. *He maketh darkness his*

secret place; his pavilion round about him are dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. He is manifested, in a certain sense, in his works. *The heavens declare the glory of God,* and so does earth. *Lo, these are parts of his ways;* but how little a portion is heard of Him? And because He is not seen, *the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God;* and even God's people are not beyond the reach of the fiery arrows of the adversary. He may ask us questions like these: "How do you know, not only that the Scriptures are true, but that you understand them? How do you know that there is another life beyond this—a day of judgment, a heaven, a hell? What do you know of a world which your eyes have never beheld, and from which none of your

nearest friends, who have gone hence, ever return to tell you what death has revealed to them?"

But he who would be a strong Christian must not waver. Let him examine the evidences of the Bible as fully as his mental needs require, and then let him take his position, firmly and finally: "Here will I stand; this Book shall be my guide; I will believe, trust, obey. Come what will, whatever proves true, whatever proves false in the future, here will I rest; on this rock will I build my hopes, my purposes, my life, my eternity."

2. A thoroughly fixed, ever active, all-controlling principle of obedience to the Divine will.

A fixed belief in God carries with it, logically, the obligation to obey his laws; but the obligation must be recog-

nized intelligently, deliberately, and fully. We are not our own; we *are bought with a price*, and God claims us. Let him, then, who would become a strong Christian say, in his heart, and with all his heart, "I am the Lord's; not reluctantly, but with joy I own the infinite obligation. I am the Lord's, wholly and forever: I exult in the thought. Here, at the foot of the cross, I devote my life to his service. All I am, all I possess, all of which I am capable, every act, every word, every thought, every emotion, every plan, hope, and desire—all are Christ's, and shall be his, forever. Come what will—honor or reproach, joy or sorrow, life or death—I am the Lord's; and with all my powers of mind and soul and body, with my whole being, will I serve Him,

wholly, earnestly, joyfully, world without end."

3. A thorough understanding of the duties and the spirit of the Christian life.

Conscience does not inspire all needed knowledge. Very good men have done some very strange things. Scores of Christian churches are standing to-day in this land of ours which were built by means of lotteries. A hundred years ago good men made and sold alcoholic drinks, and themselves drank them daily, sometimes to a degree of intoxication. George Whitefield, one of the most laborious and successful ministers of the Gospel that ever lived, seemed to care for nothing but to serve God and do good. He traveled thousands of miles to solicit funds to erect his orphan asylum

in Georgia, secured for the institution a large tract of land, and then bought seventy-five negroes to cultivate the plantation.

No; conscience is not an inspiration of all truth in regard to morals and religion. God does nothing needlessly. When he gave the Ten Commandments to Moses he wrote them upon stone that they might be the visible, permanent standard of right. *And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.* As the light is created for the eye, and the eye for the light, so conscience and revelation are given, each for the other. As the best eye needs the light, that there may be vision, so the most tender conscience needs revealed truth, or man *walketh in darkness, and knoweth not*

whither he goeth. The most conscientious can only do what they believe to be right, and, where there is a lack of knowledge, they are liable to do evil while they are aiming to do well.

They who write, set down the forms of the letters as they remember them. Each has a style of penmanship peculiar to himself, because he has adopted certain peculiar ways of shaping the letters. Each identifies his own writing, because he recognizes the shapes which he has adopted. That which is without, merely represents that which is within. If the shapes, as the mind sees them, are accurate, the forms on the paper will be good. If the mental shapes are defective, the writing will be poor. Thus the visible is controlled by the invisible.

Thus, however conscientious and de-

vout a Christian may be, his outward life will be shaped by the idea within. He can do only what he believes to be the Divine will ; and if the inner thought be astray, the outward act will be equally out of the way. He will be honest, according to his idea of honesty ; he will be true, according to his notion of truthfulness only ; he will be devotional, benevolent, and faithful, only as, in his thinking, he figures devotion, benevolence, and fidelity. That which is without, is shaped by that which is within. He may, indeed, fall below his ideal, but he can never rise above it.

He who would be a thorough Christian needs not only to comprehend the law of God, but to catch the spirit of the new life, its purity of motive, its high courage, its divine sense of honor,

its generous love, its joyous loyalty to God and the right, its lofty enthusiasm for all that is elevated and noble. Complete obedience carries the whole heart with it. He who scans the requirements of the Divine law with the keen eye and reluctant spirit of a miser paying a debt, which he would repudiate if he dared, can render no acceptable service. He who is always anxiously inquiring for the lowest terms upon which he may persuade himself that he is a Christian, might as well conclude, first as last, that it costs too much for him.

But he who is gratefully, joyfully loyal to God with his whole heart needs to secure a full and accurate idea of practical religion. When he can say sincerely with the Psalmist, *I will delight myself in thy statutes; I will not forget*

thy word—he needs to add the Psalmist's prayer: *Blessed art thou, O Lord; teach me thy statutes.* He ought to remember alway the twofold exhortation of the apostle, *Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* Knowledge without grace is worth little. Grace without knowledge is shorn of its strength. Grace and knowledge make a strong and beautiful character, adorned with every virtue and enriched with all the elements of spiritual power.

4. An unfaltering trust in God, and in the Lord Jesus Christ as a present and all-powerful Saviour.

He who is striving with his whole heart to please God and do his duty, as he is led thereto by the Divine word, is in the path of life. I care not how little

peace, how little hope or joy, he may possess; if the blackness of darkness is about him alway, if it seems to him that not a ray of light salutes his eager eyes, still let him keep steadily on his way. He is assuredly in the narrow path, and he will *yet see the king in his beauty, and behold the land that is very far off.* Ofttimes the seeming clouds which shut out the sun are but the dimness of our own eyes—not the darkening of the heavens.

Nevertheless, darkness and doubt are not the normal condition of a child of God. Where the intellect clearly apprehends Divine truth, and the heart joyfully consents, and the whole soul accepts, believes, trusts, appropriates the promises, the natural result is peace and joy. And this present, clinging, appro-

priating faith is the instrument whereby the believer maintains his hold on God and allies himself to eternal powers. This union is the strength of the Christian. We read in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews the record of the achievements of the worthies of old, and we find that their victories were all the triumphs of faith. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice. By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death. By faith Noah builded the ark; and Abraham, looking for a city which hath foundations, journeyed, not knowing whither he went; and Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; and the long line of divine heroes subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,*

and triumphed in the prison and the flame.

The same faith is still needed to enable men to war against an evil world, breaking its snares, defying its enmity, and keeping themselves unspotted from its sins. The same faith is needed to resist the attacks of spiritual foes, and to maintain the watchfulness and self-mastery without which defeat is inevitable. By this same faith is gained all spiritual growth, a warmer love, a brighter hope, a more steady trust, a swifter progress upward toward God and the light. Thus the soul, in the hour when Christ is very near, and the Spirit of God reveals the riches of grace, sees opening to its raptured vision glorious possibilities of attainment; when it perceives how small and feeble

the past has been, compared with what may be; when there comes an ardent desire for a more thorough conformity to the Divine will, a fuller joy, a clearer vision of things unseen, a yearning to ascend the heights and fathom the depths revealed, and know all the sweetness and the power of grace, all the fullness of God, then faith is the hand that seizes the infinite prize and grasps the treasures of heaven.

Will the reader suffer a word of exhortation? Grow. A healthy spiritual condition always tends to advance in divine things. Every one, indeed, who is born of God has attained an exalted state. He is the King's son. Let him not undervalue his birthright. Still, his trial-life is not ended. He is in the midst of enemies. The devil

assails, the world allures, his own impulses and tendencies demand constant watchfulness and control. But every step of true progress brings new courage and skill for the warfare, a better access to God in prayer, a prompter victory over temptation, a more steady peace, and a richer joy. Each advance gives a better preparation for acceptable service and for useful labors. Each degree of progress lessens the perils of the way, gives new assurance of final victory, and brings into clearer outline the image of God in the soul. Thus the earnest, faithful follower of Christ grows in grace, and, *beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, is changed into the same image from glory to glory.* Assuredly, progress is exceedingly desirable.

Moreover, continuous growth is a condition of continuous religious enjoyment.

We go into the orchard in May. A cloud of blossoms delights the eye and loads the air with fragrance, while the hum of bees fills the place with soft music. We inquire the age of the trees, and the response is, Forty years. But how much of the tree is forty years, or even thirty years, old? Only a little of it, and that little is near the ground and buried deep in the center of the trunk. The myriad slender twigs, which stretch upward and around in every direction, grew last year. The oldest part of the tree is down near the root; the newest is at the ends of the boughs.

And the blossoms are all on the new wood, the very latest growth. There will

the fruit be found in October. There are no blossoms, there is no fruit, springing from the dry bark of the trunk or of the great branches. Nor will the fragrant blossoms of religious joy grow out of the dry bark of an old experience, through which the sap has ceased to circulate. When the tree ceases to grow there are no more blossoms, no more fruit. Thus, when the Christian ceases to grow, though he may not have wholly cast away his confidence and gone back to his sins, his religious enjoyment declines. Prayer, praise, the Divine word, the assembly of God's people, no longer delight him as they once did. He may still hold on his way after a fashion, and be really a child of God; but he cannot retain the joyous emotions, the anointing oil of gladness, which

belong to a vigorous spiritual life. He may be doing well, but it is certainly possible to do better.

See what heights others have gained. The piety of the saintly Fletcher attracts the wondering eyes of all who love the deep things of God, *and by it, being dead, he yet speaketh.* How full of spiritual power was the daily life of Bramwell!

Other branches of God's Church present their witnesses of the fullness of grace. James Brainard Taylor thus describes his own experience: "Memorable day! The time and the place will never—no, never—be forgotten. I pleaded and wrestled with God; and, praise to his name! after six long years I found what I had so long and so earnestly sought. My earnest desire then was, as it had been ever since I professed religion

six years' before, that all love of the world might be destroyed, all selfishness extirpated, pride banished, unbelief removed, all idols dethroned, every thing hostile to holiness and opposed to the Divine will crucified, that holiness to the Lord might be engraved on my heart. I was enabled in my heart to say, 'Here, Lord, take me, take my whole soul, and seal me thine—thine now, and thine forever. If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.' Then ensued such emotions as I never before experienced; all was calm and tranquil, silent, solemn, and a heaven of love pervaded my whole soul. People may call this blessing by what name they please—faith of assurance, holiness, perfect love, sanctification. It makes no difference with me whether they give it a name or no name, it con-

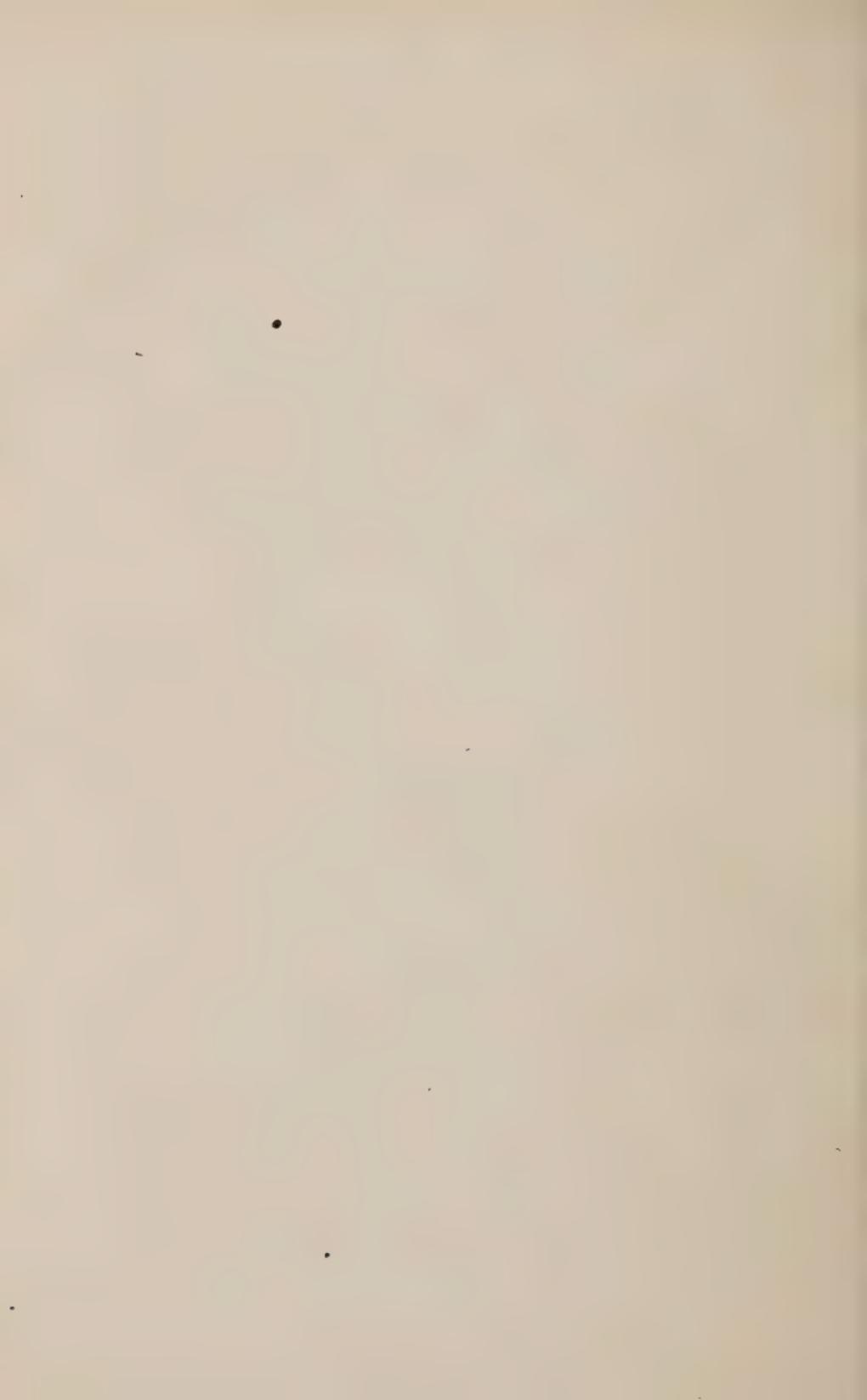
tinues a blessed reality; and, thanks to my heavenly Father! it is my privilege to enjoy it. It is yours also."

Dr. Edward Payson describes himself as a resident of Bunyan's land of Beulah, "where the sun always shines and the birds always sing." "The celestial city is full in my view, its glories beam upon me, its breezes fan me, its odors are wafted to me, its sounds strike my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart." He had long been passing through alternate sunshine and cloud; but now all was light. He wonders that he had not sooner discovered his privilege, and exclaims, "O that I had known this twenty years ago!"

We need not multiply examples. *This is the will of God, even your sanctification.* Praise God for his precious,

present grace, and press on to what lies beyond. *There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed*, and the promises cover every foot of its sacred soil. Like Caleb and Joshua, then, *follow the Lord fully, and go up and possess the goodly heritage.*

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